

# **FOLLOWING THE RED PATH**

**The Native People's Caravan, 1974**



**by Vern Harper (◁?σ)**



Frontispiece: John LaFord

C-1  
Copyright © 1979 Vern Harper

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of NC Press Limited.

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Harper, Vern.  
Following the Red Path

Bibliography: p.  
Includes index.  
ISBN 0-919600-58-1 pa.

1. Indians of North America - Canada - Government relations. 2. Indians of North America - Canada - Social conditions. 3. Indians of North America - Canada - Land tenure. 4. Demonstrations - Canada.  
I Title.

E 92.H37

323.1'19'7071

C79-094114-7

We would like to thank the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for their assistance in the production of this book.

New Canada Publications, a division of NC Press Limited, Box 4010, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1H8.

*"I believe every Native person is born into the movement."*

*—Leonard Peltier from Oakalla Prison, B.C., April 1976*

Leonard Peltier is an Oglala Sioux activist from Wounded Knee and a leader of the American Indian Movement. He was arrested by the RCMP at Small Boy's camp in Alberta on February 6, 1976, after being hunted down by the American government in its war against Native resistance across the land. The Canadian government, co-operating with the FBI, extradited him to the United States on December 18, 1976. As part of the ongoing struggle for Nationhood by all Native people in North America, this book is dedicated to Leonard Peltier and to all other Native American political prisoners.



## Author's note

It took hundreds of people to make the Native People's Caravan happen, and I would like to thank all the brothers and sisters who participated in the Caravan and supported us across the country.

Special thanks to my wife, Pauline Shirt Harper, who was one of the strongest believers and workers in the Caravan and who worked alongside me in developing this book; to my children and grandchildren, who were patient while I worked on the project, and who will always be part of the movement; and to Louis Cameron, who encouraged me to record the Caravan's history.

I would also like to thank Genevieve Leslie and Norman Zlotkin for helping me put the story down on paper. It's important to talk about the process of writing this book, so that other Native people will be encouraged to write about our history as it happens. Like many Native people I have had very little formal schooling, and when I started to work on this book — over two years ago — I had just taught myself how to read and write. We worked with tape recordings and transcripts, and I circulated a first draft of the manuscript to people in the Native community for comments. By the time the book was finished I had learned a lot about writing and publishing, but I had also discovered that if Native people really want to get message across they can use modern technology to do it, in our traditional storytelling way.

Many other people contributed to the writing of this book, and I would like to thank the following individuals and groups for their time, effort and support: Richard Bedwash, Mary Bowen, Bright

Eyes, Bernie Bunny, Stephen Burdeck, Maria Campbell, Christine Collins, Joleigh Commandant, Dorothy Contin, Ginger Cote, Christine Daniels, Rosie Douglas, Don Filayson, Bucky Green, Vicki Green, Tommy Harper, Vince Harper, Judy Haiven, Larry Haiven, Carol Johnston, Clarence Kakage, Nancy Kimura, Joanna Leslie, Bill Lewis, Lone Wolf, Fay Mackenzie, John MacLeod, Jenny Margetts, Geri Martin, Michael Martin, Jeffrey McDonald, Don McLean, Rianne Nahwegezhic, Don Nelson from Saskatchewan, Gordon Nightscout, Rose Nightscout, Roger Obonsawin, Mary Paisley, Clara Pratt, John Pratt, Heather Ramsay, Paul Ritchie, Jackie Rosen, Larry Rosen, Doris Rotz, Pauline Smith, Dawn Smoke, Art Solomon, Wayne Stonechild, Naz Therriault, Shannon Two-Feathers, Spence Waboose, Don Whiteside, Jim Wilkinson, Agnes Woods, Bobby Woods, Nancy Paul Woods, the Allied Indian-Métis Society (AIMS) in Kingston, Anduhyaun, the Canadian Native Friendship Centre in Toronto, the Federation of Native Friendship Centres, the Métis and Non-Status Indian Association of Saskatchewan, the Native Brotherhoods in the federal and provincial penal institutions, the Nelson Small-Legs Jr. Foundation, Pedahbun Lodge, the Prisoners' Rights Organization, the Toronto Quakers Indian Committee, the Wandering Spirit Survival School, and the many others who made this book possible. Thanks also to Carolyn Walker of NC Press for her patience in learning what "Indian time" is all about.

And, finally, a very special thank you to the elders and to the grandfathers.

## Contents

I	<i>How the Caravan Began</i>	/19
II	<i>Vancouver to Saskatoon: On the Road</i>	/13
III	<i>Regina: No Drinking Allowed</i>	/19
IV	<i>Winnipeg: Showdown over the RCMP</i>	/23
V	<i>Kenora: The Leadership Splits</i>	/27
VI	<i>Thunder Bay: A New Leadership Emerges</i>	/31
VII	<i>The Soo and Sudbury: Picking Up Speed</i>	/35
VIII	<i>Time Out to Rest</i>	/39
IX	<i>Trouble in Toronto</i>	/43
X	<i>On to Ottawa</i>	/49
XI	<i>The RCMP Riot</i>	/55
XII	<i>Back from the Hill</i>	/67
XIII	<i>The Native People's Embassy</i>	/73
XIV	<i>Government-Funded Native Organizations</i>	/77
XV	<i>What's After Tomorrow?</i>	/83
XVI	<i>Following the Red Path</i>	/89





*"In July, 1974, Louis Cameron and the Ojibway Warrior Society occupied Anicinabe Park near Kenora and demanded that it be returned to Native people." THE CANADIAN PRESS*



# I How The Caravan Began

It all started in Montréal in the summer of 1974, just after the armed occupation of Anicinabe Park, and the road blockade at Cache Creek. In July, Louis Cameron and the Ojibway Warrior Society occupied Anicinabe Park near Kenora, and demanded that it be returned to Native people. In August, Chief Ken Basil led the Cache Creek Warrior Society in a blockade of Highway 12 in British Columbia, in a protest against housing conditions on the Bonaparte Reserve.

Louis Cameron and I were in Montréal to meet some Native people and to talk about where to go next. We recognized Cache Creek and Kenora as good tactics, but we thought that another armed occupation would not accomplish much at that time. We were trying to win the public and our own people over, and we wanted to develop another tactic.

We were tossing about ideas when I suggested to Louis that we organize a caravan, since we were talking about reaching the public. There had been the Trail of Broken Treaties in the States, a caravan that went to Washington and turned into an occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs office down there, and we thought that a caravan would be a good way to get public support. Then someone mentioned that September 30th was the opening of Parliament and said, "Let's get our people to expose the hypocrisy of the Canadian government. It tells us to bring our grievances to Parliament. Well, let's test them. Let's organize and take our people to Ottawa."

We knew that official Native organizations like the National Indian Brotherhood and the Native Council of Canada weren't being listened to. It was quite clear to us that these national

Native organizations, which had been created by the government in the first place, were just being used. On the one hand, the government would say, "We'll only talk to your leaders," but when the leaders tried to talk to them the government wouldn't listen. And so we decided that we would organize to bring Native people themselves to Parliament. We would try to get the support of people in the government-funded Native organizations, and if they wanted to support us, fine. If they didn't, we'd go ahead without their help.

We decided to call across the country and talk to some of the people in the movement—American Indian Movement (AIM) groups, Warrior Societies, and other supporters. At the same time we were in touch with the brothers out West, Ken Basil and Ed Burnstick. Chief Ken Basil had been the leader of the armed road blockade at Cache Creek, and Ed Burnstick—who was working for Alberta Native Communications—was the Co-ordinator of the American Indian Movement in Canada. They were thinking of a caravan too, but they just wanted a caravan that would deal with housing on the reserves. Louis suggested that we unite our forces and put together demands that affected all Native people. We could have a national caravan coming across the country, starting in Vancouver. Ken Basil and Ed Burnstick liked the idea, and agreed to work with us.

Right from the beginning, it was to be a caravan for all Native people. Even though most of the leaders were people from the American Indian Movement, it was not an AIM caravan; it was the Native People's Caravan. There was an open call to all Native people, whether or not they lived on the other side of that imaginary line called the bor-



der. We saw ourselves as Native people, not as Canadians or Americans. But the Caravan was controlled by people who lived in the northern areas. AIM leaders in the States had their hands full where they were. They were our cousins; they wished us the best; and when they had the chance to help us they sent us one of their best spokespersons—John Trudell. But they were so busy in their own areas that they could only play a supportive role.

We talked about non-native support, and asked "Will we restrict it to certain groups?" But it was agreed that we should try to build a broad front. A call for support went out to all progressive people who would accept Native leadership and take direction from us. Anyone could join the Caravan under those conditions. It was agreed that the CPC(ML)\* would give financial and organizational support to the Caravan, using their contacts across the country.

So Louis flew out to Edmonton, and I went back to Barrie, where I was working in Browndale's programme for emotionally disturbed Native children. I had been demoted and sent to Barrie after the armed occupation at Kenora, because I had taken one of the Browndale vehicles into the Park. It was agreed that if things went smoothly I would stay in Barrie, but that if things didn't work out too well I would have to leave and join the Caravan.

On September 10th, Louis Cameron and Ken Basil held a press conference at the Native Friendship Centre in Edmonton, and announced the Caravan. After that, they went to Vancouver and set up a steering committee. There was Ken Dennis, Dennis Hanuse, Ken Basil, Ed Burnstick and Louis Cameron. It was decided that Louis should go ahead of the Caravan to raise money and drum up public support. Because of the time factor they had to move quickly. There were less than three weeks left to organize the Caravan and get to Ottawa.

\*The Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), which followed the teachings of Chairman Mao Tse Tung, as opposed to the Communist Party of Canada, which takes a pro-Russia position.

Starting out, the core of the Caravan was people from Cache Creek, and people from Skid Row in Vancouver. People were involved in the Caravan for a number of reasons. Some of them never did believe in the movement, but they believed in Native people. Some of the young women would probably have been on the street if they hadn't joined the Caravan. A lot of people had never been anywhere, had lived in isolated areas or just in the cities. This was an opportunity for them to see the country, and that was why some of them joined. But as we went from city to city, they became more interested in what the Caravan was doing. They were looking for leadership, too. They had no real trust in the official Native organizations.

And the runaways. We had some young kids who'd run away from home and the authorities were anxious to come and see who we had with us. We wouldn't allow any agency to do that, so these kids stayed with us, and as long as they behaved themselves, we accepted them. These kids had nowhere to go and were just running, but they felt at home with us and they felt good. Afterwards, some of them went back home and made amends with their families. People started to get some kind of direction on the Caravan.

Most of the people on the Caravan were young, but we had all age groups. There were some women and some families with us, and quite a few children. A really good thing was that people from different tribes were all a part of it—Micmac, Blackfoot, Cree, Ojibway, and different tribal people from British Columbia.

Our goal was to get to Ottawa by September 30th, to be on Parliament Hill for the opening of Parliament, and to bring the demands of Native people to the government. And while I was in Barrie, the Caravan started.



### *"When People Are Calling, You Go"*

"When people are calling, you go," Eetsah said, "and so I joined the Caravan. I have to struggle along with my people—their struggles are my struggles."

Eetsah is an Indian woman, an Albertan resident, who travelled with the Native People's Caravan to Ottawa. "When I joined the Caravan in Edmonton," she said, "my oldest child—she's eight—begged me to take her along with me. She knows what our struggle is all about—I've explained things to her."

"When I was going to school they always told us the government looks after you. They are there to help you. When I grew up I found out what they are doing is eliminating our people. They use different policies to get our people off the land, out of the reserves so they can get at the riches—the minerals, other natural resources—instead of letting people develop the land themselves and become economically independent."

"People are capable of solving their own problems," she said. "We don't need the government to tell us what to do."

She spoke of her people dying from mercury poisoning in Kenora. "The government," she said, "has no interest in whether the needs of our people are met or not. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development spends \$53 million just on administrative costs alone."

"In Kenora our people are dying of mercury poisoning. A lot of people died in Japan from mercury poisoning and they had exactly the same symptoms. You start quivering, trembling, you get depressed and lose weight. The same things that happen with alcohol poisoning so the doctors and the government blame it on alcohol. They don't care whether we live or die."

"That's why I went on the Caravan," she said. "Because are people are suffering and the government isn't doing anything about it."

*The Arrow, Nov./Dec. 1974*

*Setting out from the Friendship Centre on Vine Street, Vancouver.*







## II Vancouver to Saskatoon: On The Road

On Saturday, September 14th, there was a big rally in Vancouver. Two hundred people marched from Hastings Street to the Court House, and held a demonstration on the Court House steps. On the next day, September 15th, the Native People's Caravan left Vancouver.

Starting out, we had one van and about five cars. We soon realized that we were going to have a lot more people than cars, and that a lot of the cars we had would never make it across the country. So we decided to rent buses to take us from one city to another.

The buses were quite expensive and we had to pay for them with cash on the line. Money had to be raised all the time. We had people on the phones wherever we went, doing fundraising, and the P.R. people would call up organizations to ask for support. We had slips printed up asking people for donations, and we would send people into town to raise whatever money they could. There was a lot of pressure to raise money at the rallies, and it was a tremendous strain on people, not knowing if we were going to have enough money to get to the next place. So every time we announced we had enough, there'd be a big cheer.

The transportation was handled by white people, because Native people going in to rent buses would have wasted a lot of energy. Even when we had the cash, we'd still be given a hard time. So the whites went in to rent the buses, and as long as they had cash they had no problem. Later, when I joined up with the Caravan, I took over responsibility for transportation.

The way we'd travel was to start early in the morning, go all day, and push into the night. We had a tight schedule to follow. Sometimes we'd

stay at the Indian Centres, and sometimes we'd stay at churches—whatever people could arrange. In the daytime we'd be busy organizing meetings and looking after all the arrangements to keep the Caravan moving, and in the evenings we'd hold rallies. Sometimes we'd have a poor people's supper, and sometimes we'd have a dance. After the meetings, which were open to the public, we'd sit up and talk.

Right from the beginning we had a good feeling towards each other, a brother and sister feeling. There was a real sharing of things, and very little ripping each other off. We tried to keep tobacco for the people who smoked, and we made sure the kids had chocolate bars. And most of the men treated the women with respect.

People who joined the Caravan felt Native and proud—it accomplished that right away. Young people started to get to know each other, and the older people started talking to the young ones. People felt a little cocky; they felt good.

We didn't feel any animosity towards us when we stopped at stores or restaurants, when the bus drivers would demand a coffee break. At that time there were a lot of tourists around, and when they saw a whole bunch of Native people they were curious and would talk to us. At all times we maintained strong discipline. Our people were courteous, and didn't develop the kind of chauvinism you sometimes find in a large group of people.

I was surprised and glad, also, to see the attitude of the bus drivers. We were expecting a hard time from them all the way, but they were really polite. Even though they didn't spend much time with us, because they would just drive us from one major city to another, they were hoping we'd make

it to Ottawa.

Different committees were formed to take care of the different jobs. One was the P.R. committee. Jim Wenjack and Debbie Mearns and a few others went ahead to prepare for the Caravan as it came. They would call up the media and let them know we were coming, but their main job was to set up places for us to stay. They did good work on a limited budget. People would give them free meals, and take them into their homes, but lots of times they were just eating canned goods.

Then we had a security committee, to see that nobody attacked or bothered us. A lot of people would just walk in and talk to us, but I saw very little harassment. Ed Burnstick was in charge of the security.

Throughout the Caravan, leadership started to develop as people began taking on responsibility. Ginger Côté started taking over as treasurer, which was really tough because she had to hold onto the money and say no to people. At times she was unpopular, but she did her job well.

*Diary, Vancouver, September 15, 1974*

About 3:00 A.M.

The Native people of our movement gathered yesterday afternoon in downtown Van to carry out a demonstration march. It was quite successful considering what our aims were (fundraising for our cause) and of course support. We held a benefit dance later in the evening at which Whitefeather showed their support. Quite a huge success also. A rally was held at the Communists' Hall that I didn't attend so I can't make any just remarks. After the dance everybody on the Caravan had a rap session. The main purpose was to get all the loose ends and disputes cleared up before we set out. It's been a long day and I'm going to get ready for another one. In other words, go to bed. (Crash)

Member, Native People's Caravan



*"Starting out, we had one van and about five cars."*



*"After setting out from Vancouver, the Caravan went straight to Calgary."*

There were committees to cook and take care of the food, and the women organized a group to take care of sanitation and diapers. The babies were well looked after and the kids were always well fed. There was a shortage of blankets—everybody needed their own bedroll or sleeping bag—but everywhere we went the church groups would give us more.

One of our problems was keeping clean, because we had no time for dry cleaning or laundromats. People worked hard at keeping themselves clean, because of the stereotype that "Indians are dirty and lazy." Every time we had a chance, we would wash our clothes by hand. Sometimes the weather was a little cool and the clothes were hard to dry, but we put them over radiators or hung them up in the auditoriums while we were sleeping.

Wherever we went, too, we had people cleaning up. There were always people to see that everything was taken care of, and I always made sure that nobody was left behind. When the Caravan got going, I usually travelled in a car so I could keep an eye on all the buses.

We had a couple of people with medical experience, but whenever something happened that we couldn't handle, we'd phone the hospital and go to the emergency department. We had some sick people in Winnipeg, and the hospital we took them to saw them right away.

After setting out from Vancouver the Caravan went straight to Calgary, travelling all night through the mountains. It was supposed to stop in Kamloops but there wasn't enough time. Then it went to Hobbema, and from Hobbema to Edmonton, arriving on Tuesday evening. A wine bash was organized in Edmonton to raise money, and there was a poor people's supper with wieners and beans and bannock.

In Edmonton the Native organizations told us privately that they would like to support the Caravan, but that they couldn't come out and say so because of their funding. The Caravan was a hot political issue, and these organizations were afraid that their grants might be cut off. But they said they would give us financial support under the table, and some of them did.





*Calgary*

*Diary, Native People's Caravan*

*Report on Road (Van to Calgary)*

We're off now! Supposed to stop off on the roadside to put signs on cars to let people know Caravan is on its way. Stopped in Hope for 25 minutes to give time for other vehicles to catch up. Told to continue, and there will be a brief stop in Cache Creek . . . .

We've arrived in Calgary—Alberta Indian Friendship Centre at 5:00 a.m. Few had coffee and went to bed.

*Report on Road (Calgary)*

Good morning! Everyone was awakened at 9:30 a.m. Few men from the press came to the meeting and the brothers and sisters had coffee. Others did their usual cleaning up . . . Majority in the Caravan are young. The older people bless us and their spirits are with us. Chief Ken Basil intro-

duced himself as well as others on the executive committee. Action of this movement will involve all those who have a will to go. Ed Burnstick was the next speaker regarding when we arrive in Ottawa. We would like support financially, morally and physically. AIM is *not* claiming to run the whole shot of the movement. It's the people; they're speakers for the people. There was a question & answer period. The meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m. as we are on a very tight schedule.

*Report on Road (Calgary to Edmonton)*

We left the Centre at 10:30 a.m. Stopped on the outskirts to gas up. We also added eight more brothers and sisters to the bus. We arrived Hobbema at 1:30 p.m. and no one knew we were arriving. So we are trucking on into Edmonton . . . We arrived at the Edmonton Indian Friendship Centre at 3:00 p.m. We need \$700.00 for the bus. We need to raise and hustle more money . . . .

In Toronto, my wife Pauline got a phone call from Nellie Carlsen, the President of Indian Rights for Indian Women, who asked her what the Caravan was all about and then offered to give us support. They helped out with food and money, and Nellie Carlsen went to speak at the rally in Edmonton. They were the only recognized Native women's organization in Canada that officially supported the Caravan.

From Edmonton the Caravan went to Saskatoon, and then to Regina. But when the Caravan was in Edmonton, I got a call from Louis that there

were money and organizational problems. Also, Ed Burnstick was talking to the RCMP. There was a police security group that he would call up to clear the road so that rednecks wouldn't harass us, but a lot of people did not like what he was doing; they felt it was wrong. Louis was away speaking at the universities and couldn't keep an eye on things, and since I was one of the founders of the Caravan, it was felt I should get there.

So I left my job in Barrie, got on a plane, and went out to Regina.



*Hohhema*



*At the Regina Friendship Centre*



### III Regina:

## No Drinking Allowed

When I got to Regina I went to the Regina Friendship Centre where a dance had been organized for the Caravan. It was a good dance, with a live band and a lot of young people. Afterwards I met the whole group. I told them who I was and what I was doing; everyone came, and I had a chance to talk. We did this whenever someone joined the Caravan. We'd meet in a circle, and people would just say who they were.

We had meetings every night after the public rallies to discuss what had taken place during the day. We always met in a circle, and began with a prayer. Then someone would talk about Native spirituality. Everyone would take part, and anything could be brought up. People would say what they wanted and how they felt.

Sometimes there would be a little bit of what I call "testifying" going on—people talking about themselves and what they did—but the others were very patient and very tolerant. They just let people work things out. We might finish at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning, and then people would stay up and talk. There were small groups of people talking, in a fellowship kind of way, and young couples going together.

The Caravan was a learning experience for everybody on it. We were learning from each other all the time, and sharing ideas. All of us had been brainwashed and conditioned into accepting certain attitudes, so what we were doing on the Caravan was unconditioning ourselves. We had been brainwashed into believing that Native people were irresponsible and had no discipline; we were not used to seeing very positive things in ourselves. But now we began to change.

We had some older men on the Caravan that people started to listen to and treat with respect. At first people just called them "old men." This is what the conditioning had done to Native people—it had taught us that our elders were a bunch of old fools. But as the trip went on and we worked things out living together, we began to see that the older people had something to offer.

The Caravan also started breaking down tribal differences. People began to see themselves as Native, not as Cree or Blackfoot. Before, the different tribes used to feel some animosity towards each other, but all those things were put down. That's what we accomplished—feeling like Native people, not "Métis" or "status," as the Department of Indian Affairs would call us. We were making the definitions of who we were.

That's where a lot of us learned never to go back to calling ourselves non-status or Métis or half-breed. So many of us at that time would rather believe the Indian Act than our own mirrors, but people were starting to think "I'm a Native person" and feel good about it. I think the Métis people who were on the Caravan really moved right into the Native camp. I was already moving in that direction.

The non-natives usually stayed in the background and encouraged our own people to speak. Considering the mixed bag of non-native people who joined the Caravan—Christians, Marxists, atheists—they got along with each other quite well and tried to be supportive. They put their differences aside and took direction from us.

We had very little sleep; a lot of people would sleep on the buses. And the conditions were pretty

Amount in checks - <sup>45.00</sup>~~(200.00)~~ Sept. 20, 1974

			Credit	Debit	Total
Sept	20	Regina friendship Centre	\$644.70		\$644.70
"		money for gas <sup>1.20.00</sup>		1.20.00	634.70
"		Alberta Wheat Pool <sup>2.00</sup>	664.70		664.70
"		Ron L. <sup>100.00</sup>	672.70		\$672.70
"		Regina Civil Liberties <sup>24.00</sup>	772.70		772.70
"		Donations <sup>5.00</sup>	756.70		856.70
"		Donation - Street <sup>12.50</sup>	964.70		964.70
"		Donation - Street <sup>30.00</sup>	977.20		977.20
"		money for food		30.00	847.20
"		Street money - 77.30	924.50		924.50
"		Donations - 219.00	1144.50		1144.50
"		" - 8.50	1153.00		1153.00
"		Donation 360.00	1513.00		1513.00
"		Street money. 20.25	1533.25		1533.25
"		DONATIONS <sup>348.72</sup>	1881.92		1881.92
"		money from dinner			
"		money for food 6.00		6.00	1875.92
Sept	21	Bus money 1107.15		1107.15	768.77
Left Regina	"	food <sup>2.00</sup> 17.30		17.30	751.47
"		for diapers		2.00	749.47
"		donation 1.00	750.47		750.47
"		gas - 15.			735.47
"		gas - 10.00	735.47		725.47

Ledger sheet from accounts book, Native People's Caravan

tough. We were sleeping on hard basement floors. But there was very little grumbling about the conditions. I had a good feeling about the non-natives too. They were not used to discomfort, but they took it pretty well.

The Métis Society in Regina supported the Caravan, but they were quite busy because they were staging a sit-in at the Legislative Buildings the same weekend that the Caravan was going through. At the Friendship Centre they gave us a free hand. There were pots at the Centre, and we had people bringing us food. We had money to go and buy more food, and a committee of women did the cooking.

I was busy organizing financial support. Basically, it was individual working people who made it possible for the Caravan to get to Ottawa. The unions did help, but they gave small amounts. The Quakers and the CPC(ML)—maybe they wouldn't like to be lumped together—also raised money for us, but if it hadn't been for the nickels and dimes of Canadian working people, we never would have made it.

It was in Regina that we had a hassle over discipline. On the night of the dance some of the young people went uptown and got drunk. They used our flyers to solicit funds, and then went drinking with the money. We wanted people from the Caravan to go into the bars to talk to people, but not to drink.

It was a strong rule from the beginning that there would be no drugs or alcohol allowed on the Caravan, and that rule was strictly enforced. We felt that if there was a lot of smoking or drinking the police could use that to harass us. And people really respected the fact that nobody was drinking. It made quite a difference.

When these people came back to the dance it was quite obvious that they had been drinking. So after the dance was over, we asked to have a meeting. There was a heavy debate that went around for hours. It was a hard decision, and very emotional, because for a couple of people it was their own brothers and sisters that had been drinking. Some people wanted us to be liberal and give them another chance, but the majority felt that we had to have discipline. Many of the people on the Caravan were alcoholics, or had problems with drugs, but they disciplined themselves and said no. We felt that if these people were allowed to come back our discipline would break down, and we would never make it to Ottawa.

It went to a vote, and we decided to ask the people to leave. We didn't have to finger them—they knew who they were. They were told they could wait till morning but they decided they would leave right away. So they gathered their stuff up and left.

We left for Winnipeg early the next day. We didn't pick up that many people in Regina, because some of the young people who had gone up to the bars drinking had turned people off, but we did leave Regina with more support. Some people from the Métis Society joined us and some just joined right off the streets.

We had dealt with that problem; we had reinforced the idea of no drugs and no alcohol. But that was a problem which haunted us, because the same people who were kicked out, hitchhiked and met up with us in Kenora. And that helped cause a split.





*"We made it a very strong rule that the children would always stay with us."* THE CANADIAN PRESS

## IV Winnipeg:

### Showdown Over the RCMP

We couldn't get the Friendship Centre in Winnipeg, so the Unitarian Church gave us their building to use. When the buses arrived it was Saturday evening, September 21st, almost a week after the Caravan had set out from Vancouver. Everyone got out and set up their blankets and sleeping bags in the basement.

It was kind of crowded so some of the Christians, with good intentions, offered to house the children separately. Ken Basil was our acting spokesperson, and he made a good decision. He said: "No. They're a part of us, and we're not going to hand them over to anyone, no matter who they are. They'll stick with us. If we have it rough, they'll have it rough." And I supported that; it was the right decision.

We made it a very strong rule that the children would always stay with us. When we were in Sudbury some kids were in a nursery, but our people slept right in there with them. We felt that the struggle was made for all of us, and that we should go through everything together. We shouldn't separate our people.

I think the Christians just thought it would be easier. Different times they would say "Well let's take the kids," but we felt very strong about it. We had seen Children's Aid and the RCMP take our children away from us, and we were determined to keep them with us at all times—even if the Christians were good people. And the kids were feeling good about themselves too. They didn't want to be separated from us.

We had a poor people's supper and the Christians helped us fix up a supper. When we spoke in Winnipeg quite a bit of anti-white feeling came out on stage, but later when everybody mixed together

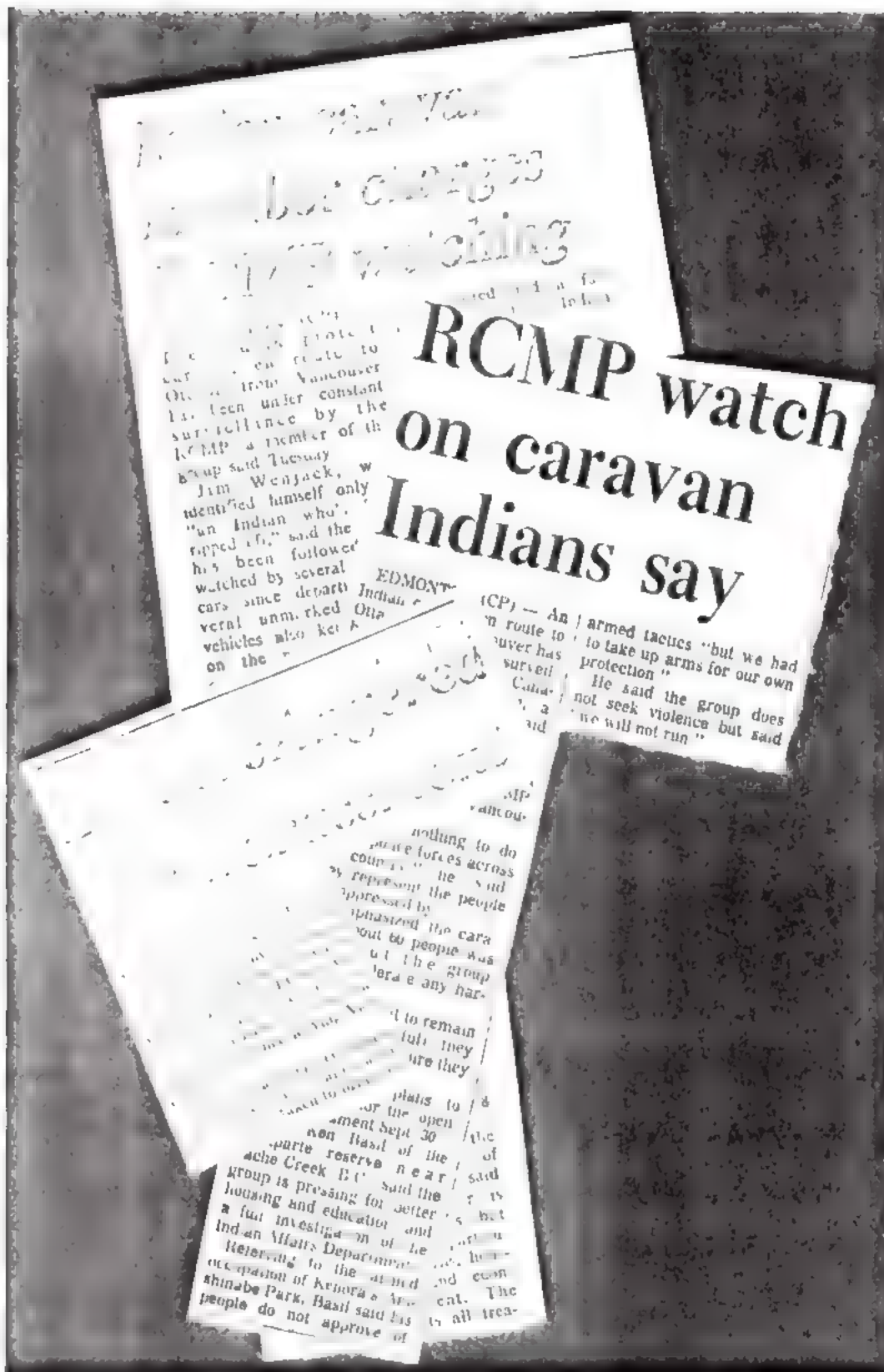
a lot of non-natives said that they understood and that they would still support the Caravan. People just wanted to get things off their chest. The Caravan was a forum where people could talk about what the boarding schools and churches had done. People were just working off some of their steam against the system.

I took over responsibility for transportation from non-natives in Winnipeg. All of the other committees were under Native leadership at the time, and more people were joining the committees. I was selected for transportation because I had money connections and support.

The non-natives on the transportation committee were two people from *Western Voice*, a radical newspaper in Vancouver. They helped with transportation from the beginning, and wanted to see a Native person be the head of it. I worked with them very well. They knew what their job was, and they tried to support, not lead.

They were very political. At the time I was kind of distrustful—I kept an eye on them—but I found that my fears were overemphasized. They were honourable and very principled, and they were really concerned about Native people. They had different political views from mine, but we talked about politics together in a friendly fashion.

One of our rented vehicles was overdue, and that was the one we were using as the head car of the Caravan. We had it all flagged up and everything. In Winnipeg we picked some young brothers to do security, and, while we were having our meeting, the finance company for the rented car tracked down the Caravan. They found our security guards sleeping on the job and repossessed the car. The next thing we noticed, when we got up





in the morning, was that there was no head car. First we thought it had been stolen and then we realized what had happened. And it was taken right in front of us. So much for our security! We reorganized the security and Dennis Hanuse took over.

At that time we didn't have a central committee. We just had individual leaders, and by the time we got to Winnipeg quite a few people were dissatisfied with the leadership—people who had kind of a radical background though they didn't belong to any political party.

Some of us felt that Ed Burnstick and Ken Basil were not keeping in touch with the people. They were our spokespersons, but the only time we saw them was during press conferences. Then they'd go off and do things on their own.

People were demanding a more democratic kind of Caravan, because the leadership was becoming too exclusive. They were in a pretty tough position because they often had to make quick decisions; they couldn't always run and call a big meeting. A lot of people respected the leadership, but they didn't like some of the methods they were using. They'd just tell people what to do and expect them to do it, and people felt the lack of participation. After Regina, we started demanding that more people be involved.

The leadership didn't always have time to consult, and there were personality conflicts, but the major difference was the collaboration with the RCMP. Burnstick was talking to the RCMP so we wouldn't be harassed by rednecks. He would let the RCMP know when we were coming and talk to them about our security problems. There was a special Security Force that he was in touch with, and they were supposed to clear the road for us. Some people on the Caravan had warrants out on them, and the RCMP said that they wouldn't pick up any of these people until after the Caravan. This is

what Burnstick was able to negotiate. But a lot of people felt that we should have nothing to do with the RCMP; we shouldn't even talk to them. Finally the people took a stand. They said "No way. They're our enemy, and we're not going to collaborate with them."

We were able to raise enough money in Winnipeg to pay for the buses to Kenora, but we were kind of disappointed in the Native response. I felt that this was where we would pick up the biggest number of people, because Winnipeg has more Native people than any other city in Canada. We put out a call to the Native organizations, but they didn't respond too well. Part of it was that we arrived on a weekend, and though our P.R. committee had gone ahead they couldn't get around to all the Native organizations by Friday afternoon. These were "9:00 to 5:00 Indians," but our schedule was all hours, all times.

We felt that the people from the Native organizations backed off on us. I think if they had been in control of the Caravan it would have been a different thing, but they would have had to join us and work their way into the leadership like anyone else. And some didn't want that.

The whole thing in Winnipeg was really poor. We overestimated how people would respond to the Caravan because we didn't really understand the conditions there. Everything is backward, and there's a lot of heavy drinking because of the conditions.

Some of the Caravan people who went out to the bars turned people off instead of turning them on, because they weren't drinking. They went in drinking coke and saying "We're part of the Caravan . . .", and the people in the bars resented it. We just expected everyone to come rushing to support us, so it was kind of a rude awakening. We were more realistic about things from there on. It was a slap in the face, but it did wake us up.



*"There were a few hundred of us, and we marched from the Kenora Fellowship Centre to the school auditorium, right through the centre of town."*

## V Kenora:

### The Leadership Splits

Kenora meant many things to many people. We were all a little nervous because this was just after the occupation of the park. We didn't know if we were going to be facing a big mob of vigilantes or what was going to happen, but we were well prepared and well disciplined. This was where Wayne Stonechild and some of his people caught up to us from Regina.

We decided to hold a rally at the high school, but we were staying at the Kenora Fellowship Centre on the other side of town—about a ten minute walk away. There were a few hundred of us, and we marched from the Fellowship Centre to the school auditorium, right through the centre of town.

It was like a ghost town—the streets were bare. The RCMP and OPP must have worked together in getting the rednecks off the streets, because we walked right past the bars and didn't see anybody. They might have been afraid that a political confrontation in Kenora would give us a lot more support across the country.

We had a feeling that our people would support us in Kenora, and that's the way it turned out. The Fellowship Centre treated us very well, and many people said that they would like to join us but couldn't leave because of their families. We had to raise more money to get to Thunder Bay so we had a pow-wow at the Centre on Monday night. There was a lot of drumming, and people spoke. It was really good.

In Kenora it was decided that the men would eat first (in the old traditional warrior way) and the women would eat later. I opposed it but the majority ruled, and the sisters went along with it reluctantly. The Fellowship Centre gave us a fantastic

meal of Kentucky Fried Chicken but there wasn't enough chicken to go around, so without us noticing it the sisters just put some aside for themselves. All the brothers felt pretty good, lining up for the food and laughing. But by Thunder Bay there was such strong opposition that we went back to the other way, everybody eating together.

One of the things we tried to deal with on the Caravan was some of the sexism within our own minds and attitudes. There were some brothers who went into the kitchen periodically to help with the tables and clean up, but a lot of times the men were in the kitchen just so they could get snacks. Some of the younger brothers didn't want to do kitchen detail, and they tried to use tradition—so-called tradition—to get out of it. When they were asked to pick up the mop they would say "Oh no, warriors don't do that," but some of the older brothers would say "Well everyone gets it dirty. We should all help each other." Most people felt that way.

We were looking at the women's question, trying to understand it and treat our sisters better. We were looking at gay people, too, and seeing that they were human beings like the rest of us. We had a couple of gay sisters on the Caravan and they weren't put down; they were treated with respect. I think a lot of us were just opening our eyes and ears for the first time.

But in Kenora the problems with the leadership were coming to a head. People were disgruntled with the leadership, and Ed Burnstick was very paranoid, seeing Communists under every tree. He and Ken Basil felt that they were losing control.

At the same time, the people who had been





*Pow-wow at the Fellowship Centre in Kenora*

asked to leave the Caravan for drinking arrived back at the Caravan and asked if they could rejoin. They had hitchhiked on their own from Regina. Ed Burnstick opposed it and I supported him, because I felt that these people had had their chance; if we allowed them back in, then other people could go and drink too. But we lost the vote.

Ed Burnstick and Ken Basil were dissatisfied with the vote because it meant that they had to answer more to the people now, and so they decided to leave. They were encouraging other people to leave with them, and when Louis Cameron heard that they were prepared to break up the Caravan, he came back from his speaking engagements and rejoined us in Kenora. We said to the people, "We've come this far. Do we disband the Caravan or continue?" And the majority of the people said "We want to keep going." About 17 people left, out of more than 200, and the rest decided that they would stay.

The next morning, when we were getting ready to go, Basil and Burnstick left. They said they were going to the States, and were given some money to

leave, but then they decided to form a Caravan and go to Ottawa themselves. We asked them not to hold any press conferences and they said that they wouldn't, but when they arrived in Winnipeg they did hold one. Later they said that Communists were trying to take over the Caravan, which was not true at all because no groups were trying to take over.

Wayne Stonechild emerged as a spokesperson at that time. He and I were temporarily in charge, so we got people on the buses and got the buses to Thunder Bay.

I think Burnstick really felt that he could deal with the RCMP, but many of us who had suffered personally from them had no trust for them. We saw them as our traditional enemy, as the force created to occupy our land, to oppress us, and even to take our children away from us. Many of us felt very bitter at just hearing their name, and wanted nothing to do with them. Myself, I had great hatred towards the RCMP.

When I was younger, quite a few years ago, I was working in the sugar-beet fields in Lethbridge,

Alberta when I was picked up by the RCMP. They were looking for one of my older half-brothers. He had been into a lot of trouble with the law, and they thought that they could find him through me. So they picked me up and took me to the police station for questioning.

They started by asking me where my brother was. They said that he had been involved in a jewellery robbery, and they wanted to know where he was and where he had put the jewels. I didn't know, but even if I had known I wouldn't have told them, and I told them so. So they hit me, and I fought back. I defended myself, and being a former boxer I can look after myself pretty well. I hit one and knocked him down, and then they decided to give it to me. Four of them started to beat me up.

I lost consciousness and woke up a couple of times while they kept on beating me. They tried different tactics. I remember lying on the floor after I woke up. One acted friendly towards me and said he didn't agree with this—all I had to do was tell them about my brother—and cleaned the blood off my face. One eye was closed then, my nose was smashed, a couple of teeth were knocked out and a couple of my ribs were cracked, but I told *him* where to go. Then the other guys came in, and they weren't so friendly. I would have been killed, but they had to be careful because they had no real reason for keeping me there. It was just an interrogation, not a real arrest, and my friends were all waiting outside.

I spit in one guy's face because they were calling me all kinds of names, racial names. Then, when they realized that they weren't going to get it out of me by beating me, I heard them say, "Let's try something else." And one of them came over—I think he was a sergeant—saying that I didn't look like an Indian, why was I with Indians, they knew I was a breed, and I looked like an Irishman. From my previous record they knew my background, and they knew that I had Irish blood in me. He said that he would stop all the beating, that I could stop everything and they would let me go right there. All I had to do was say that I wasn't an Indian, that I was an Irishman, because they don't beat up white

men. I told them to go screw themselves. And I think that right there they did me a favour. Because of being Métis, I'd always had this struggle within myself, whether I was Native or White. And they helped me decide.

They kicked my legs so I couldn't move and then said "Get him out." They had to drag me through an office, and I'll always remember it—one eye was closed and the other was closing, but I could see the people in the office turning their backs so they would not be a witness to what was happening. They turned and faced the other way. And when they got me to the door they threw me in the back alley.

When you get a heavy beating, after awhile your body just becomes immune to it; you can't feel the pain anymore. My friends told me later that I had been interrogated for four hours. Four hours of beating. When they told me that, I could hardly talk, but I swore. My friends took me to the sugar-beets, and I couldn't work for a couple of months. It took me almost three months to recover from that beating.

So that was my personal thing against the RCMP. When any of our people tried to collaborate with them or talk to them, I would just get furious. It was a personal thing, but also a historical thing. I understood the role of the RCMP. And I knew how they used and degraded our Native symbols. Very few of our own people know that the symbolic protector of Cree women is the buffalo. By using the buffalo on their uniforms and their cars, the RCMP are saying that *they* are the protectors of Native women, of all Native people. But everybody knows that in the hundred years of their history it's been the opposite. They've raped and killed our mothers and sisters.

And so a lot of us were opposed to having anything to do with the RCMP. Some of the people who did not understand the history, people like Burnstick who did not investigate or make analysis, would say "Well that's in the past; that's not happening now." But the RCMP riot on Parliament Hill was to show us that history repeats itself. The RCMP have a tradition to follow and that's what they live up to.



*In Thunder Bay, twelve people were elected to be on the Central Committee. Shown here (from left to right) are Ken Dennis, Bill Creely, Wayne Stonechild, Ron Sevmour, Wandering River, Dennis Hanuse (standing) and Vern Harper.*



## **VI Thunder Bay: A New Leadership Emerges**

In Thunder Bay all of our people met together for an election. We had a lot more people then, so we decided that we should have more people to speak for us. It would be more democratic that way. This idea of a Central Committee came from the people themselves.

Twelve people were nominated and we were going to have a vote, when someone suggested "Why not make all of them the Committee?" Since it seemed that everybody was in favour of all twelve people, it was felt that this was the best thing to do. They were asked if they would accept the responsibility and they all agreed that they would. Then they went on stage and spoke.

There were people on the Committee from all the areas we passed through. Dennis Hanuse, Debbie Mearns, Larry Joseph and Ken Dennis were from B.C.; Skip Greenstalk was from Alberta; Wayne Stonechild and myself were from Saskatchewan; Jim Wenjack, Louis Cameron and Ron Seymour were from Ontario. Then there was Bill Creely, an old Saskatchewan former chief, and a young Plains traditionalist called Wandering River. Everybody felt good about it too, because there were no hard feelings.

We had everything on the Central Committee. We had young people and middle-aged people and elders. We had people who couldn't read or write, and people with a university education. We all worked together and helped each other.

In white organizations one person becomes the leader, but we were exercising a different type of leadership—one that represented the people. We all had different qualities and abilities, so when different issues came up we could deal with them.

That's how the Central Committee was designed.

People at the general meetings would decide what to do the next day and then the Central Committee would put these decisions into action. Any discussions would go around and around until an opinion came out that everyone felt was right. It was always done that way. It was a traditional Native way of making decisions and it would take hours. Some of the non-natives used to get a little impatient, but the discussion would go on until we reached a democratic decision that served all the people. The Central Committee would meet afterwards.

This is where leadership started to develop. Not the kind of leadership that was just in there for the money or for themselves, but people who were really dedicated, like Wayne Stonechild and Ron Seymour and Louis Cameron. Leaders who served the people instead of acting like bosses.

But the media didn't want to deal with the Central Committee. They wanted one spokesperson, and Louis Cameron was signified because he was the leader of the armed occupation in Kenora. This was the white way of thinking about leadership. The majority of us, and even Louis himself, wanted a more democratic type of organization. I think when Louis rejoined the Caravan in Kenora it reassured people; his prestige and his influence made people feel better. But after our meeting in Thunder Bay there was such a good spirit—resistance spirit—that people decided they would walk to Ottawa if they had to.

We had a rally in Thunder Bay that was one of the best on the Caravan. Quite a few people from the community came and different people spoke,

including Louis, Ken Dennis, Dennis Hanuse, Ron Seymour and myself. There was real fellowship among the people, and feelings of Native pride were really coming out.

There was quite a bit of anti-white feeling coming out, too, among the young people. The older ones like myself tried to restrain it, but we thought it was a healthy sign. We thought it was better to work it out than to hold it all in. Non-natives found it hard to understand why Native people were so frustrated.

I remember one time later in the Embassy—the building we occupied in Ottawa—a supporter came up to me and said, “Now you’re on the Central Committee. How can you tolerate this? Look at the walls. It says ‘honky eat shit’ and ‘honky this’ and ‘honky that.’” I looked at it and said “Well personally I don’t approve of it, but isn’t it better that these young people write it on the walls than hit you over the head with a club or take you and grab you by the throat? They’re working out years of frustration, and they can get some of it out that way, instead of doing it by force.” I think the man I was talking to understood a little bit. Young women who were with us had been raped by white men; young men had been beaten up. But on the Caravan, people were beginning to feel comfortable with themselves and their Native identity.

There was an older Jewish fellow called Abe who had joined us and was with us all the way; he was very supportive. A lot of times there was some hostility towards him just because his skin was white, but he held his ground and people started to respect him.

Whenever we had free time people would walk out into town and see things. Some people on the Caravan had never been out of their areas, so it was an education for them. And I really started to respect a lot of our people there, because there were some heavy alcohol and drug users. There was a group from B.C. who had totally quit. I knew it was hard for them, that a lot of the time they felt they needed to have a drink or to toke up or something, but they were really serious and they helped to give direction to other people. They were people from the Cache Creek Warrior Society. They inspired everybody.

We took things seriously on the Caravan but not too seriously. People used to play practical jokes on each other. I remember one time when we had to get money for gas at about 5:00 in the morning, and I went to wake up Ginger Côté, the treasurer. I found four young security guards sleeping all around her. She had security to see that nothing happened to the money, because that was our transportation, but I think some of the brothers were just interested in being near her. She was a good looking woman, and they liked her.

I went and told Louis, “Come here. See this? Look at our security; they’re supposed to be guarding her.” We stepped right over them, reached underneath the pillow, took out the money, and put it back. And Ginger and the security guards didn’t even know that we had been there. In the morning we told the brothers they’d better do security a little better, but they didn’t know what we were talking about.

Half a dozen people joined the Caravan in Thunder Bay. At each stop we expected a lot more people to join us, but because the Caravan was travelling so fast people didn’t have a chance to catch hold of it. One of the mistakes we made was to concentrate on the cities. If we’d made a couple of detours and gone into the reserves we would have had reserve support, even if we didn’t get that many people joining. It wouldn’t have been that difficult, because we were coming across the Trans-Canada which goes through or near quite a few reserves.

In Thunder Bay we had to raise some more money. The Unitarian Church, where we stayed, did a lot of work and supported us well. We were always able to raise just enough money to charter the buses, and some people with cars would join us at each city. We stayed in Thunder Bay a few days, and got ready to go down to the next place. It was Sault Ste. Marie.

Thunder Bay was the turning point of the Caravan because it was there that we decided we were going to be successful. There were outside forces trying to put us down, but after the Central Committee came together people were determined to make it, one way or another.



Day to day people ask us  
why do you demonstrate,  
why the guns, why the caravans,  
why the arrogance?

We must remember the men, women and children  
who suffered and died before us,  
we must remember the high percentage  
of Indians being held in prisons throughout  
the country,  
the high suicide rate, the drugs, the alcohol,  
the psychological damage caused by cultural  
genocide,  
the land steals,  
the tarpaper shacks that chill you to the bone,  
the monthly welfare cheques,  
the endless hunt for a non-existent job,  
the hunger pangs from lack of proper food,  
the junkies looking for a fix and O-D-ing,  
the people on the street,  
the rapings, the beatings, the murders by the RCMP,  
begging the DIA for scraps of money  
for projects written and typespaced according  
to the  
supreme crap of the DIA and government

You who ride your Cadillac, your LTD,  
watch your coloured TV in your warm protected  
air-conditioned home in the suburbs,  
you can no longer hide it under a table or behind  
a door.  
The problem is now out in the open.

You are the problem,  
the problem of pollution, political corruption,  
genocide, imperial international mediation,  
stealing of resources through violent corrupt  
tactics.

You go to your religious gatherings  
and read your ten commandments  
which you have broken like the treaties you broke.  
Yes, it is this illusion which you live in  
which will destroy you and what you stand for,  
you will never live up to  
the highest development of a human being.

So when you wonder  
why there are demonstrations, occupations,  
movements,  
try to open your eyes and ears  
and activate that rusty brain  
because we have found you out,  
through 500 years of patient quiet struggle,  
and we mean business.  
The life and death of a race and culture is at stake.

We will no longer be passive and liberal.  
We will fight rather than die in silence,  
in jails, on dope, on alcohol, and by the rest  
of the tools of oppression you have devised.  
Member, The Native People's Caravan, 1974



*Dancing in a school auditorium in Sault Ste. Marie*



## VII The Soo and Sudbury: Picking Up Speed

On the trip from Thunder Bay to the Soo I was travelling in a car and could stop at some of the reserves along the way. We couldn't spend much time there, but we talked to a few people. It seemed that there were power struggles on the reserves, with the Department of Indian Affairs and local agencies lining up on one side to help certain families get control.

Just outside the Soo, there was a young guy hitchhiking from one reserve to another. When we got talking to him and told him about the Caravan he just stopped what he was doing and came with us—all the way to Ottawa. We would often pick up hitchhikers on the highway. All the people would yell, "There's Indians!" and the bus would stop and we'd give them a ride. So we picked up some people that way, and I think the Caravan had a real effect on all of them.

Our P.R. group went ahead of us into Sault Ste. Marie to make arrangements. The Friendship Centre there co-operated with us very well but it was too small for all of us, so they helped us to find a big school and we stayed in the auditorium. We left just when school was getting started.

We appreciated the showers in that school because not all of the places we stayed at had them. Sometimes men and women showered together; sometimes the women would be by themselves; and sometimes the single men went into the boys' shower. But basically everyone just shared the washrooms. People's washrooms, we called them. Nobody seemed to get hung up on things.

The rally in the Soo was really good, because it had one of the bigger turnouts from the reserves. There are quite a few reserves around the Soo, and

some of the people from the area came in to support us. Jim Dumont, who is a spiritual person living in that area, came with his wife Edna Manitowabi. Everybody had a chance to say a few words.

Just before we left to go to Sudbury a couple of white punks from the high school came to make some trouble, but our people were already on the buses so we just ignored them. People were tired, but their spirits were high.

Sudbury was kind of an exciting time. Our group was getting really big—over 200—and we had two churches because we couldn't stay in just one. They were down the street from one another, up on a hill. Dr. Peter Newberry from Laurentian University, who has worked with Native people, came out in support. He and some of the church people helped prepare food. People were hungry and the food was good.

We had our rally in a church, and I think I was one of the first speakers. I got up and made an anti-Catholic speech and that set the tone for the evening. I think the whole rally focused on denouncing the Church. The people who had set it up for us were Catholic priests, so they were very upset. Then some union people from the workers' organizations came up and spoke in support. This was one of the main places that the unions came out. It was a good, militant, anti-church rally. The church people spoke to a couple of Native people later, but they made sure they avoided me.

We had a couple of bad incidents in Sudbury. We had to march from a hall to a school across town, and it was quite a march. There were a lot of us, and the drums were going. A car got between



*"People were learning how to deal with the media, but it was a new experience for us."*

some of the people and almost ran them over, so a couple of brothers kicked at the car door. Later the people in that car came back to where our car was, and slashed the tires.

Then a couple of our young boys were caught shoplifting. We were really concerned about that, because we didn't quite know how to handle it. We were going to discipline them quite harshly when they were released. There was a whole debate about what we should do with them, and we considered all kinds of things. Finally it wasn't left in our hands, because the authorities sent these boys back home.

I think tempers were getting a little short in Sudbury, because discipline started to break down a bit. We had some time on our hands, and people were going uptown. And people were getting kind of worried. At this time Louis Cameron was doing

P.R. work in Hamilton, and the media reported him saying that people from the Caravan could strap bombs on their backs and take them into Parliament. And that's quite true; we could have. But they made it sound like we were going to do it. This got the people on the Caravan and our supporters quite upset. It seemed that some of the media wanted us to start fighting among ourselves but the Committee decided that we should support Louis, so we made a statement saying that we supported Louis and that he was our spokesperson.

People were learning how to deal with the media, but it was a new experience for us. A lot of us had never done it before, and we sometimes thought that the media people were personally responsible for a lot of our problems. When the Caravan was starting out we got bad publicity at every city, and that turned a lot of people off. We

had not developed any rapport with the media, and at first a lot of our people harassed and attacked them, just like they were the enemy. Some of them are, of course, because some are anti-Indian, but the majority are not. As we met and talked with them we realized that they were just doing their job, and that it was really the publishers, the owners of the newspapers, who set the policies.

Later, as the Caravan went on and the leadership became more democratic, we got people with

experience to deal with the media. We started to learn how to talk to them, how to try to gain their sympathy and win them to some kind of understanding—not turn them off.

We were travelling pretty fast by then, going day and night. We had to get up very early in the morning and go to bed very late at night, and we were always worried about whether we could raise enough money. People were getting tired.





*"There was a Native awareness that was really coming out."*

KELLY WHITE OF THE NATIVE PEOPLE'S EMBASSY

PHOTOGRAPHED AT RADIO CARLETON, JANUARY 1975, BY BRUCE PATON



## VIII Time Out to Rest

Time was getting short to get to Ottawa, and people were starting to get edgy. We'd had some meetings because of the shoplifting, and some of the leadership had been a little hard on the people. A number of us had used heavy words—told the people to shape up, and swore at them. Myself, I remember speaking and swearing quite a bit.

Our next stop was Toronto, but on the way down we stopped off at one of the Quakers' camps. During the Caravan there was great distrust towards the Christians, and we referred to them as "Christians." I don't think we got that much support from the Catholic Church—it was mostly Lutheran and United. The Quakers, I felt, played quite a good role, but some of us kept a very close eye on them and still do.

The Quakers had been with us since Winnipeg. Some of them were the same people who had put their bodies on the line in Kenora, so people trusted them. One of them was a woman, Joleigh Commandant, who was married to a Native person and a registered Indian herself, because marrying an Indian man makes you an Indian woman under the Indian Act. She was an interesting person because she had been in the civil rights movement in the States in the 60s. She tried not to lead but support, and the Quakers in general played a supportive role. People like Joleigh were well-respected because they worked hard.

The Quakers had arranged for us to spend a day at one of their camps, and it was really good. We got there in the early morning and spent the whole day there. This was in the fall, and the weather was warm. It was a cottage type of place, and we had a real good meal. Some people went swimming, and a lot of brothers were playing base-

ball and throwing a football around. People were talking to each other and young couples were holding hands.

There was a lot of romancing going on during the Caravan. It always happens, in an occupation or anything like that. People who were my age and older noticed what was going on but we just watched it; in fact, we were kind of pleased. In my time, the 50s, we'd seen our men going after white women and Native women going after white men. Because of the pressure to assimilate—from the churches, the government and Indian Affairs—they were ashamed of their own people. And here we saw a reversal of it. We saw young women interested in their own men and vice versa, and it made us feel good.

There was a Native awareness that was really coming out. People were wearing red ribbons, but they'd wear them in different ways; they wanted to show that they were together but also that they were individuals.

Brothers who'd never had their hair braided started to braid their hair and wear chokers. It wasn't that braiding your hair or wearing a choker made you a Native person, but it was like exercising a right—if you wanted to do it you should be able to, without being ridiculed or persecuted. For some of the men it was the first time they'd ever had their hair braided.

The women started to look at themselves too, and to feel better about themselves. I could remember the whole mass assimilation thing of the 50s—I went through that—and here, in 1974, I saw the opposite. Native women were washing off their make-up and braiding their hair. There was one sister who had blonde hair when she started with

the Caravan, but by the time we were finished she had dyed her hair back to her natural colour.

Before a rally, it would be just like a dress rehearsal. The men would be getting their hair done and it would take a long time; it was like a ritual. Sometimes it was used as an introduction. A young brother would walk up to a sister and say "Would you braid my hair?" and if she didn't know how another sister would show her. A lot of relationships started that way.

All during the Caravan people were talking about things and seeing things. It was really an educational trip—we showed that we could do this kind of thing without going off to another country on a student exchange. At the beginning of the Caravan, the idea was just "Let's get a whole bunch of people across from one place to another and be on the Hill on the 30th," not realizing what we could do on the Caravan itself by way of political education. Most of the people who were not politically-minded when they joined the Caravan, were when they left. Their whole level of understanding changed, and their dedication became quite clear. This happened for young people and older people; the Caravan was educational for everybody.

People like Wandering River and Bill Creely were really good for people my age and younger, because we had been conditioned since childhood to reject our old people and the people who talked about spiritualism. Here they were facing us, and we had a contradiction to deal with.

Bill Creely was an elder in every sense of the word. He recorded the history and kept it in his mind; he was able to give interpretations of what he'd seen; he knew the legends and stories of the Cree people; he spoke his own language and Cree very well. He had served in the Canadian Armed Forces and had fought in Europe. He could talk about the '40s and '50s, about how the state had tried to assimilate Native people. He told us about whole reserves being moved from one place to the other, and about people actually being kidnapped—how the RCMP would come with arms and move whole communities from one place to another. He had an understanding of the Caravan, and was for it all the way.

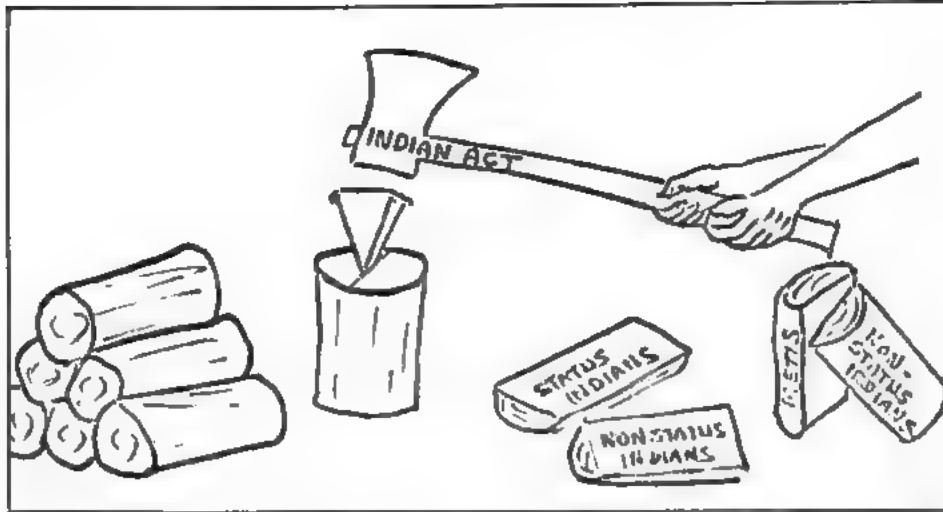
Wandering River was not political at all but he had a pretty good look at political things, and he

knew a lot more about what was going on than people gave him credit for. He could tell beautiful legends. He dressed in a traditional way, and had long braids. He was short in stature, but big in the ways of his people. At that time I thought some of the things he talked about were just foolish; now, I'm beginning to understand. But Wandering River taught us many things. He tried to live like a Native person and be in tune with himself, without exploiting anybody.

At the meetings you could see what people were coming through. There was always real strong fellowship between people. We started talking about our experiences in the boarding schools, about our contempt for the government and the church, and how they worked hand in hand. A lot of people were talking about Marxism and socialism. All this rhetoric was new, and people were kind of investigating it. But many of us felt that the capitalist system—where a few rich people own all the land, the businesses and the resources—was fundamentally antagonistic to the traditional Native way of life. Most of the people on the Caravan had gone through a heavy background, had been disillusioned by Native organizations and the churches, and they were looking around—experimenting with new ideas and new thoughts. Some people were attracted to socialism because of what it had done for other oppressed nations in the Third World.

Most of the people on the Caravan were from the cities, but a lot of people had joined from the reserves. That was a sharing thing too, and the ones who were poverty-stricken—like the ones who had lost their culture, their mother's language—were affected the most. The ones from the reserves who could speak their languages really started to understand the value of what they had.

In every place we stopped, local people would tell us about the local conditions. We'd ask people how they felt about things. It was a learning situation all the time, and as we travelled our understanding grew. Some of the B.C. people had just come for housing, but with different people joining the Caravan, and different ideas being expressed, the Manifesto began to form. The demand for Native education came out of the discussion of the boarding schools. We knew it was very important that we start to understand the role of education,



and that we start fighting to get control of the education of Native people.

We talked about spiritualism, and offered prayers. I think that was when we were beginning to understand Native spiritualism. Now, in 1978, there is a strong spiritualist movement going right across the country and I think the Caravan helped to start that re-awakening. Every nation has some spiritual direction, or it should, and ours is not an exception.

We began to see ourselves as an oppressed nation, not as a national minority. We started to understand how the Indian Act is used to divide us, but we were moving to overcome that. Living together and working together on the Caravan we began to see that we do have the same problems, the same things to overcome, and it helped to unify us. But it came from a gut feeling that we are a nation of people, a Red Nation, and that it's up to us to put it into language that people can understand.

There was always that feeling towards one another, a strong, Native feeling. Every time we'd sit down and have the drumming going, it was just like the heart of a nation, beginning to beat.

You could see how people respected each other. Everybody was kind of taking inventory of who they were and what they were and what they wanted. At all the meetings people would talk, and flashes would come into them about their own personal experiences, about the alcoholism. We wished that a lot more people had been with us. We realized that not all of them could be and that some

didn't want to be. But we had a purpose. We were determined to get to Ottawa.

We had a meeting before we left the camp, and one of the sisters got hold of me and gave me hell for being hard on the people and swearing at them. I realized I was wrong, and before we got on the bus I asked the people if they would forgive me. I said I had no right to talk to them like that and I would make sure it didn't happen again. The people said that it was O.K., just forget it. Then we got on the bus, and everybody headed for Toronto. But I think that extra rest really did us good.

#### *"When People Are Calling, You Go"*

Eetsah talked of her trip across the country.

"The trip to Ottawa was a wonderful experience," she said. "Everywhere along the way people welcomed us. We stayed in all different kinds of places—schools, churches, Indian Friendship Centres, a Quaker camp. All different kinds of people and organizations supported us and gave us money. Both old and young—a tremendous response, warm and friendly.

"Everywhere along the way there were press conferences and pow wows, rallies and benefit dances. It was a tremendous experience to feel the unity among our people and hear of the support of many different organizations like trade unions and church groups, etc.

"The government has tried to divide us, but we will not be divided any longer. We will decide our own destiny; we can make our own contributions to a better world for everyone. We have done so in the past and can do so again."

*The Arrow*, Nov./Dec. 1974



*Louis Cameron at Amcinabe Park, August, 1974* BETTER READ GRAPHICS



## IX Trouble in Toronto

The local AIM chapter in Toronto did not support us, and our people were really disappointed that they didn't. At the rally in Thunder Bay, the word was that the Native community in Toronto was upset. The Toronto Committee had never fully recognized Louis Cameron's leadership, and when Ken Basil and Ed Burnstick left the Caravan in Kenora it thought that the so-called "leadership" was gone.

This Committee included Alec Akiwenzie, Judi Norris, Roger Obonsawin, Paul Ritchie and Pauline Ross (a non-native woman). They met in a secret meeting at the Paramount but would not allow my wife, Pauline, to attend, though they were happy to have her do the cooking when the Caravan arrived later on. At that time, the Toronto Committee had the potential to be a powerful Native group. Even though Winnipeg and Regina had more Native people, Toronto had the organizations and it had good workers. And at one time it had one of the largest AIM chapters, with over 200 members. The people on the Committee had the opportunity to put it all together, but they diminished their effectiveness by dragging their heels.

What happened then was that the CPC(ML), along with some other groups, started to organize support in Toronto. There was a clear understanding from the beginning that the CPC(ML) was to stay in the background and play a supportive role. They had given us good support during Kenora—had helped us financially and worked under our direction. When Louis and I were in Montréal we talked to Hardial Bains, the leader of the CPC(ML), and he agreed that they would again give us financial and organizational support, and

accept Native leadership.

Hardial tried to live up to that, but many of his followers did not. Instead of staying in the background they tried to lead. The idea of Native people telling them what to do was unheard of, and that chauvinism, especially in Ontario, was what caused some of the trouble.

A whole anti-communist thing started happening in Toronto because some people thought that the CPC(ML) was running the Caravan. This was not true at all; there were only four or five Native supporters of Marxist-Leninism on the Caravan, including myself. So Louis Cameron and Wayne Stonechild flew down from Thunder Bay to talk to people and straighten things out.

One of the members of the CPC(ML) had conducted himself very poorly, and some of the people in Toronto used that as an out, as an excuse to say that the Caravan was communist-controlled. The people who were putting themselves forward as the Toronto leadership of AIM had personal grudges against Louis that went back a long time, even before the armed occupation at Kenora, and this gave them an excuse to withdraw their support.

There was a lot of red-baiting by this self-appointed leadership. They would attack communism and denounce people on the Caravan for accepting support from radical groups, but they did not analyze the situation; they just ranted and raved. Even some of the white radical groups used the involvement of the CPC(ML) as an excuse to back off. They worked together in Vancouver, but across the prairies that broke down. The Communist Party of Canada sent only a token force, and some of the Trotskyist groups didn't even get involved. Still, there were quite a few individual

radicals who supported the Caravan and gave it money.

What a lot of people seemed to forget was that the Caravan was called by Native people! The Caravan was open to all our people, and if they had been a part of it and joined us, the CPC(ML) would not even have been noticed. But all they did was criticize, not participate.

I think one weakness of the Caravan and the Central Committee was that we didn't stand up strongly enough when we saw the media and the CPC(ML) treating one person as the leader. That wasn't in the best interests of the Caravan, and we failed Louis by allowing them to do that. By making a hero out of him, the media and the CPC(ML) were putting him up on a pedestal. And his enemies were quite happy to see that happen, because then they could isolate him. At different times when we thought Louis was choosing the wrong tactic we did not confront him; we just let it go. We were willing to take credit for the good things, but we weren't willing to share responsibility for the mistakes. But in Toronto, we felt that the Native community should have just told the CPC(ML)-ers to back off, instead of deciding not to support us.

Also, you've got to remember the conditions. This was Toronto, which had the biggest number of middle-class Native people in Canada. Some of them liked the benefits they were receiving from the system, or they were afraid of the system. They wanted to prove that they were not the trouble-makers or the radicals or the activists. An important thing in all struggles is that it shows people where they are at. So the people on the Caravan felt some animosity towards the Toronto Native community.

The Caravan didn't have to go to Toronto; we could have gone by it. But we decided to go into the city and have a rally. Because the old Canadian Native Friendship Centre on Beverly Street was too small, we stayed at a high school in the west end, Harbord Collegiate. Our P.R. people had got things kind of mixed up before we arrived and we had a hard time finding out exactly where we were staying, but when we finally came in we had a good meal that my wife and some of the Rochdale people had organized for us.

Everybody was tired from the trip, so we settled down in the school auditorium. We took the mats and our sleeping blankets and spread out to lie down. The older brothers were tired, so some of the young people volunteered to do security. And that night in Toronto a racist group of thugs, the Western Guard, sent a gang to attack us. Our non-native, radical supporters heard about it, and got together and formed a unit. When the Western Guard came to attack us, our white brothers met them on the street and drove them off. We were still inside the school and didn't even know what was going on. During this brief skirmish some people in the neighbourhood called the police. A whole bunch of police arrived but by that time everything was over. They wanted to find out what was going on so they came up to the school, and our young security guards—who had sticks and clubs to arm themselves—dropped them and ran. They came running in to wake up Louis and myself and others, yelling "The pigs! The pigs! They're coming!" We woke up from a heavy sleep and got dressed and went out, but the police just wanted to know what was going on. We told them that everything was O.K. and they left. Then we realized how young our security was, and laughed. But it would have been a different situation if someone had been hurt, so after that we put some older brothers together with the younger people on security.

When we were in Toronto, Maria Campbell joined the Caravan. She was a cousin of mine, and the author of *Half-Breed*. Her dad had been a known communist sympathizer for many years, but later he became disillusioned with the Communist Party. I was amazed to learn that quite a few of the older people had at one time been in the Communist Party and had a history of knowing about socialism—our Canadian type of socialism. I'd had the feeling that our people were anti-communist, but I realized that this was wrong, that it was just a misinterpretation on my part. Many of our people were open to socialism, but a lot of anti-communist work had been done by the churches, Indian Affairs, and regional community workers. In Toronto, many people in the Native community did not distinguish between the different communist parties and the different radical groups. Because they were angry at the CPC(ML) they condemned everyone in the left.



*"Everybody was tired from the trip, so we settled down in the school auditorium."*

On the same night that we were having our rally, the middle-class Native people in Toronto were having a banquet for the North American Indian Club. These were the people from the Native organizations, and people who at that time controlled the board of directors at the Native Canadian Centre. Some of us asked if we could come to the banquet and speak about the Caravan. It cost \$12.00 a person and we couldn't afford that, so we asked if they would let us come without paying the \$12.00. They said no, that we would have to pay. So we raised some money from our people to go there.

There were six of us who went over, while we were having our rally, and we had to pay. We didn't argue with the guy, so we were allowed in and we were given our own table. There were quite a few people there. They were all very well-to-do: working people, middle-class people, and some society people who supported Native issues. Some people were friendly towards us—Gary George and

a few others—but some people were indifferent and some were hostile.

I forget who the guest speaker was; people almost fell asleep while he was talking. Johnny Yesno, who is very well-known in the Native community, was the emcee. He was very open and wanted to help, but when we asked if someone from the Caravan could speak, they opposed it. They told Johnny that we couldn't speak because then they'd have to allow anyone to speak. When Johnny introduced people he introduced some of us, and announced who we were. He asked people to pass around the hat for us and I think we got back what we paid to get in, and a little bit more. Then we left to get back to our rally.

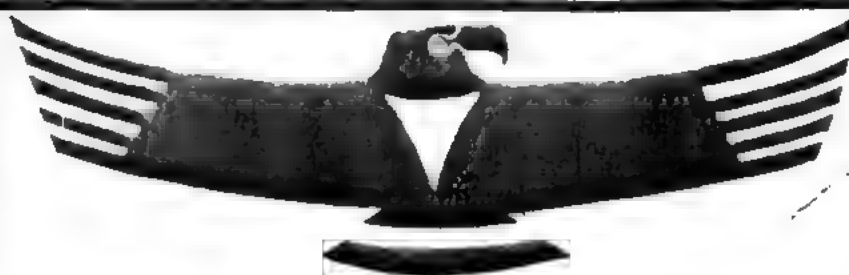
People were quite pleased when we left. Some people supported us, but the majority were kind of embarrassed; they just saw us as a bunch of radicals and troublemakers. Most of them were quite drunk and a few even fell out of their chairs. We were quite disgusted at the whole thing. And it was

something for us to see a combination of tuxedos with chokers, and evening gowns with Native hair ties. The six of us were dressed kind of militant; we had headbands on, and tunics. I think that most of those people felt really uncomfortable that we were there. And we felt good that we made them uncomfortable.

Louis was upset that we had gone there and a lot of people felt it was a waste of time, but we felt

it was important that we go talk to these people and let them know what we were doing. We felt that we should have some dialogue with them, not just write them off. And we felt it was important they didn't write us off. We went there to raise money, to awaken their conscience, and to make them feel uncomfortable, which we did—successful on all points.

*Torn poster advertising the Toronto rally, September 28, 1974*



## SUPPORT THE NATIVE PEOPLES' FIGHT!

### INDIANS STAND UP FOR RIGHTS NATIVE PEOPLE'S CARAVAN HEADING FOR TORONTO

On September 27th, the Native People's Caravan, a cavalcade of over 250 people in cars and buses, will be arriving in Toronto. The Caravan began in Vancouver on September 14th, travelling across the country to explain the problems and anger of the native people and build the Caravan for a demonstration on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on Monday September 30th.

Invited leaders of the Caravan will be speaking at a public meeting this Saturday September 28th at 8:00 p.m. at Harbord Collegiate Institute about why they have been forced to use plans to defend their human and hereditary rights.

Over the past two months, they have occupied land taken from them in Kenora, Ontario and blocked the highways running through their lands in Cache Creek, British Columbia. More and more, Indian people will no longer tolerate rotten living conditions which mean that their average life expectancy is only 35 years, only one in ten families have running water, 95 per cent are unemployed in Kenora and other areas, the school dropout rate is over 75 per cent in high schools.

The Caravan is going to Ottawa September 30th to

make these demands at the opening of Parliament:

- 1 That treaty rights and aboriginal rights of native people be recognized and respected.
- 2 An end to the Indian Act.
- 3 A full investigation of the Department of Indian Affairs by Native People for the purpose of dissolving it.
- 4 A just settlement of Indian land claims.
- 5 Decent housing for native peoples.
- 6 Economic development of the reserves.
- 7 Adequate health care and education for native peoples.

Speakers at the Rally will be members of the Central Steering Committee of the Native People's in the Caravan, leaders of the Warriors Society and leaders of the American Indian Movement.

COME TO THE PUBLIC MEETING SATURDAY  
JOIN THE CARAVAN TO OTTAWA

SUPPORT THE NATIVE PEOPLES' FIGHT FOR  
DECENT LIVING CONDITIONS AND TO REGAIN  
THEIR LAND AND HEREDITARY RIGHTS.

## TORONTO RALLY

Harbord Collegiate, 286 Harbord (two blocks West of Bathurst)

September 28, 1974, 8:00 p.m.

## DEMONSTRATION

OTTAWA — Parliament Hill September 30 1:00 p.m.

Authorized by the CENTRAL STEERING COMMITTEE of the NATIVE PEOPLES

For information on the rally or transportation to Ottawa, or to contribute food and assistance for the Caravan, please call the Indian Centre of Toronto, 210 Beverley Street, Ph



Then we went back to our meeting, which was one of the best rallies we had. It was at Harbord Collegiate, and the place was packed—I think there were about 700 people there. Maria Campbell spoke, and got a standing ovation. David Campbell, a Native folksinger from Guyana, came and sang. He joined the Caravan, and stayed with us till Ottawa.

It was a very militant rally. Some of the Native people who came said afterwards that it was a turning point for them. When they heard people speak at that rally they started getting involved, and some of the Toronto people who were there have now become strong supporters of the movement. So it was a very political, very important meeting. Again, a real feeling of Nativeness emerged, and people felt quite proud. There was no real anti-white feeling. It was a very good, positive meeting.

The non-native support in Toronto was one of the best; people really came out. But from the point of view of Native support, the downer for us was Toronto. At that time I was very militant, and I felt that these people in Toronto were cowards. I felt that they were terrified of the government. They had every reason to be, because the government has its tanks and its army and the RCMP. We on the Caravan recognized that, but we were prepared to fight for Native nationhood. That's why we were on the Caravan, because we were prepared to struggle, to stand up and be part of a movement.

Some of the local Native leaders started supporting us, but we felt that they should have taken a stronger stand. I think that there was poor leadership, and that many people just went along with it. But people from Toronto responded much more positively to the Caravan after what happened on Parliament Hill. They held a demonstration in Queen's Park, and were one of the first to demand an inquiry into the RCMP riot.

I talked to some of the Toronto people later, and they said they felt they had made a mistake, that they should have supported us. We're all entitled to make mistakes if we learn from them. But at the time Toronto was the most disappointing spot, because it had so much potential. Old grudges have been held for quite a while, and the grudges from Kenora and the Caravan just more or less went away in 1977.

People from the Toronto community had a very good opportunity to support the Caravan, but because of the conditioning of their own lives they felt that we weren't capable of controlling it. They felt that anyone could take us over. And so they underestimated us, and overestimated the non-natives. They had a lack of confidence in their own people. Us, it just made us all the more determined.

It is wonderful to see all of you again. I want to tell you about my purpose in joining the Caravan in Edmonton, and my feelings about the whole thing.

I am a mother and a grandmother and a Native woman. For the last four years I have been on a real downer, because I thought I would never again see the work I watched my father and other Native people do during the 1940s. It seemed that all we were ever going to accomplish was organizing more bureaucratic offices. Then something happened about a year ago—Wounded Knee—and things started happening all over the country . . . .

I went to a residential school and a white public school, and I know that no history ever written about Native people was made by my kind. As a writer, the most important role I can play in the movement is to tell our people about our history. Our leaders did not give up; our leaders in the early 1900s were condemned by their own communities and government officials, but they did not give up.

For 500 years they have tried to kill us, but they have never destroyed the spirit in each of us to fight. During some of my research, I came across a priest's diary from the 1500s, which said, "The only way to destroy these people is to destroy their unity, to break the mother." They almost did that, but Native women have always fought against genocide. Sisters are very important in the movement, and the Caravan recognizes that.

There are all sorts of movements happening in Canada—with women, with poor people—but today Native people are leading the struggle. We have no reason to be afraid of violence, because we live with it. Go back to the communities, and together we will fight our common enemy.

Part of a speech by Maria Campbell,  
September 28, 1974, Toronto



*Dennis Hanuse (left) and Wandering River (right) in Ottawa, September 29, 1974* THE CANADIAN PRESS

## X On To Ottawa

On the 29th some of us drove up to Montréal from Toronto to a rally organized by the CPC(ML). By this time some of the people from the Central Committee were displeased with the CPC(ML), and right away there were problems. Hardial Bains was supposed to chair the meeting, and Louis didn't want him to. The CPC(ML) had wanted Louis to emerge as the leader of the Caravan, but when he started acting like a leader and making decisions on his own, they got upset. He couldn't be controlled, as they hoped he could be.

I was caught right in the middle, because I was a supporter of the CPC(ML), and of course I was with Louis. I had been attracted to the CPC(ML) because it was the only party in Canada to follow the teachings of Mao Tse Tung, who had done so much for the Chinese people, and at that time I felt their organization could be used to advance the interests of Native people in this country. After the Caravan, when the differences between us became clear and I went my way, the CPC(ML) told me that I was "a snake in the pocket of the people" and would wind up in "the garbage can of history." But only time and struggle will show who ends up in the garbage can of history.

The rally in Montréal was fairly good and raised quite a bit of money, though it could have been better. It didn't have the same feeling of unity as the other rallies. Louis chaired the meeting and Hardial didn't even speak, so the CPC(ML) was mad about that. They got the idea that we just wanted to take their money and that was it. And a lot of people on the Caravan wanted it that way. After the meeting Louis came back to Toronto to rejoin the Caravan and the rest of us drove to Ottawa to check out the arrangements for our stay there.

It was a constant worry whether the Caravan would get to Ottawa, but once we arrived in Toronto we knew that we would make it. People spent two days in Toronto before going up to Ottawa. Anxiety was getting quite high. People were starting to feel good, but they didn't know what was going to happen. It was tiring too, because we'd been on the road for two weeks, going day and night, sleeping on hard floors, and not eating for long periods of time. Sometimes we just ate sandwiches on the bus, or got one meal to last us all day. People were also starting to get their clothes together in Toronto. That was important, to have a good appearance.

We had people going ahead to Ottawa to find a place for us to stay and they found us an old empty building that was just perfect for us, on an island in the Ottawa River. The Caravan arrived in Ottawa on the evening of the 29th of September, and got in there late. I think the police were expecting us to occupy some government offices, so when we moved in early and took over that building we caught everyone off guard.

A few people came to the building to join us, and we had a security set-up that people had to go through. We felt that some of the people from the Native organizations didn't really come in support. They didn't participate; they just stayed on the fringe and watched. And we had some Christians coming to see what was happening.

By the time we got to Ottawa, we were really exhausted. Then, next morning, we had to get ready for the Hill.

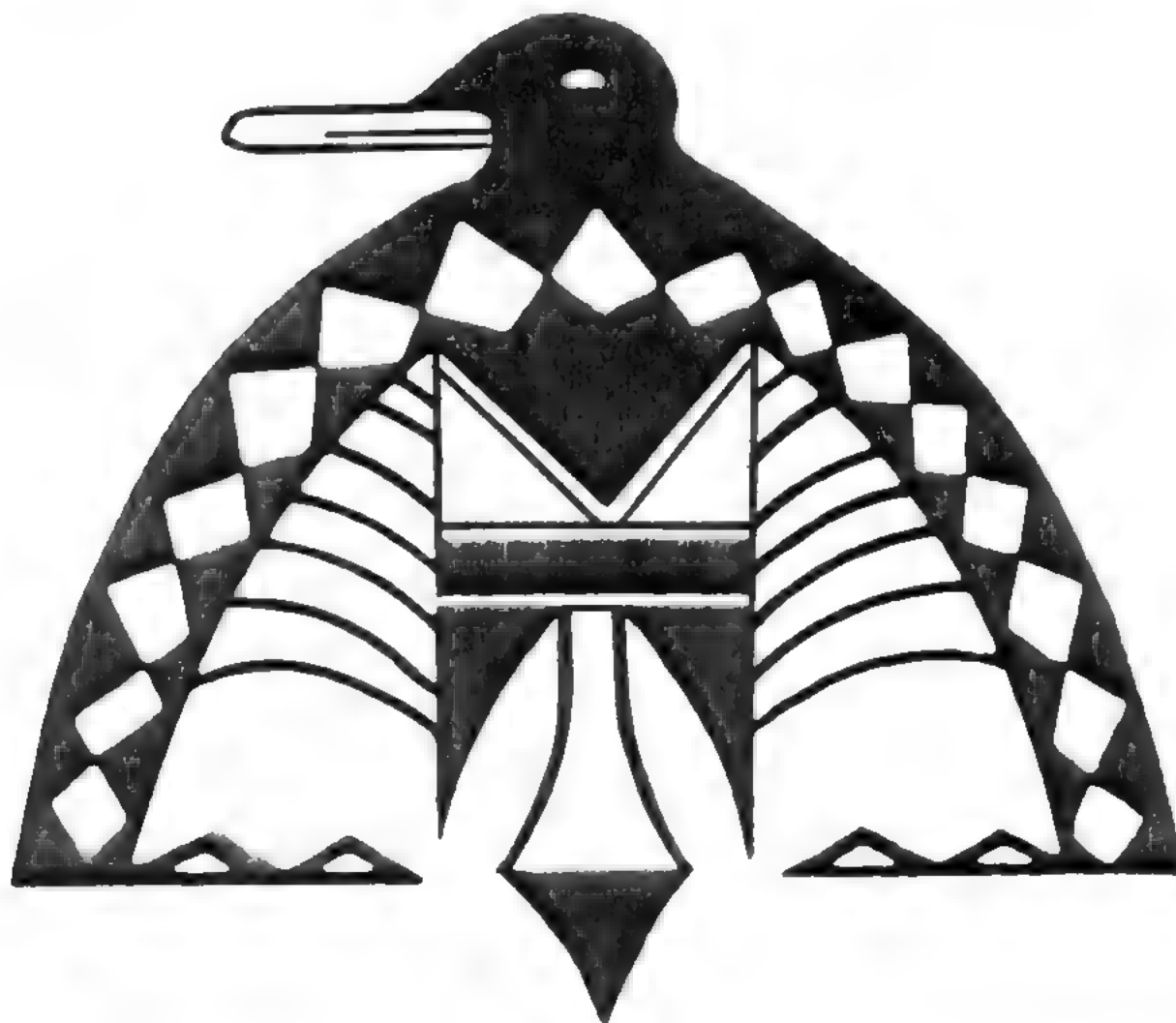


# **MANIFESTO**



**To the people of Canada and  
the Government of Canada**

**From the Native Peoples' Caravan**







## DECLARATION



**We the Native Peoples have banded together to come to Ottawa seeking justice.**

**We the Native Peoples are here to talk about justice. We are here to talk about equality and human rights. We are here to talk about the right of all people to live as free people.**

**For many years we have received promises instead of human rights. Promises instead of justice. We are here to say the people cannot live on promises.**

**Our people lived in freedom and harmony with our mother earth thousands of years before the coming of the Europeans and their values. Our people had strong families, our people had education, our people had control of their lives, our people had the religion of giving and respect for all of our mother earth's creations.**

**Today our people exist in the midst of the Canadian extension of European competitive values. Today our people have alcoholism. Today our people have no education. Today our people have no work. Today our people have no housing. Today our people have no respect.**

**We are here to talk about violence.**

**We are against violence. The violence of racism, poverty, economic dependence, alcoholism, land theft and educational warfare. This is the violence that has hurt our people. We say it is time for the democracy of Canada to end its political and social violence against our people.**

**We say it is time for the Canadian political system to be reasonable and listen to the voice of our community.**

**We say you have been unreasonable. The proof is evident in the conditions our people exist in. Since the politicians have taken control of our lives the destruction of our communities has increased.**

**We are here to speak of solutions.**

**We do not want promises and rhetoric.**

**We want humane action.**

**We are here to talk about constructive action.**

**This time we are still willing to talk but we will not sit idly to the side while the destruction of our people is completed.**

**We only seek to live as free people. It is the way of the land and its children.**

**The will of the people to be free is supreme.**

**The right of the people to be free is divine.**

# The demands of the Native Peoples' Caravan

1

The hereditary and treaty rights of all Native People's in Canada, including Indian, Metis, Non-status and Inuit, must be recognized and respected in the constitution of Canada.

It is the continuing violation of our hereditary rights that has resulted in the destruction of the self-reliance of the Native peoples. We are no longer content to be the most impoverished peoples of Canada.



2

We demand the repeal of the present Indian Act and the creation by Native People of new legislation recognizing our right to self-determination and sovereignty over our lands.



3

The Department of Indian Affairs operates to serve business and government interests — not the interests of the Indian people.

We demand a complete investigation of the Department of Indian Affairs by Native People and the transfer of its power and resources to Native communities. *Indian Affairs must belong to the Indian people.* Indian Affairs must be separated from the Department of Northern Development.



4

We demand annual payments in perpetuity from all levels of government.

Canadian wealth is derived from the land and the natural resources of the land. *The time has come for Canadian governments to pay their debts to Native peoples.*



5

We demand an end to the destruction of our Native economies.



6

We demand immediate payment of \$2.5 billion from money not presently allocated to Indian Affairs which will be used by local Native communities to meet their needs for the development of self-sufficient economies.

It is racial discrimination and genocide that the federal government pays \$750 million to the province of Prince Edward Island (with its population of less than 1/3 of the native population) for economic development but has refused to provide equivalent money for the Native peoples, the most impoverished peoples of Canada.



**7**

**We demand that the standard of housing in Native communities be immediately raised to the Canadian average.**

**\$800 million of money not presently allocated to Indian Affairs must be made available to local Native communities for housing needs this year.**



**8**

**We demand health care facilities and services which are adequate to raise the life expectancy of Native people to the Canadian average within five years.**

**If underdeveloped countries such as China and Cuba are capable of raising their standards of health care dramatically over short periods of time, it is genocidal that a rich country like Canada continues to ignore the desperate health needs of the Native people.**



**9**

**We demand an end to Federal cutbacks on Native education and an expansion of community controlled Native education.**

**The education system must be made to serve Native people rather than Native peoples being made to serve an educational system designed to destroy native cultures.**



**10**

***Violence and oppression will only be ended when both the hereditary and human rights of the Native peoples are truly upheld.***

**We demand that \$500 million be made available of money not presently allocated to Indian Affairs to Native communities for legal defence.**

**Native people must no longer fill the prisons and mental wards of Canada.**

**RACIST JUSTICE MUST END.**





*Setting out from the Native People's Embassy for Parliament Hill*



## XI The RCMP Riot

I remember getting up on the morning of the 30th, after having a good rest. A cold wind was coming but our spirits were high, and people were all starting to prepare. We were living fairly close to one another, so we noticed what everyone else was doing. One sister called Stretch had a big black hat and was putting on her make-up and lipstick. Quite a few of the women thought this was amusing, because they didn't use make-up of any kind; they frowned upon it. This sister was a street person and she was getting all dolled up, just like she was going to a dance. It was kind of a carnival atmosphere. Everyone felt excited, and quite proud too, because we had accomplished what we set out to do. It was September 30th, we were going to be up on the Hill, and we felt good about ourselves. A lot of people—even the people in the Native organizations—didn't think we'd make it. And we had made it.

By this time I had my family with me; they joined from Toronto. My wife, Pauline, was there, and all my kids: Vince, who was 16 at the time; Deanna, who was 11; Luana, who was 9; Clayton ("Harper"), who was 6; Teddy, who was 4; and Leslie, who was just over a year old.

We had a meeting before we went, and talked about a few things. We had decided to get up early and get up on the Hill. In some ways that was an advantage and in some ways a disadvantage, because we didn't have enough time to prepare people for the actual demonstration. We never really planned how long we were going to be up there; we felt that a Member of Parliament would come out to meet us.

We had not prepared for violence at all. We talked about violence, but we didn't really believe it would happen. This was Ottawa, and this was Parliament, which they say is the place for us to come and bring our grievances. And that's the way we went.

The sisters had organized themselves to look after the children and keep them together, and we had organized a type of security around our people. The Quakers didn't come with us. They usually don't get into demonstrations because of their non-violent role, so they stayed behind and we respected that.

Just before we left, Louis asked me to check and see that everybody was out of the building who was going. Some of the young brothers had been digging around and found a box of lead spikes. These young people—14 and 15 years old—started picking the spikes up and arming themselves with them, but Peter Linklater and myself said "We're going up there by ourselves. We have our hands to defend ourselves; we don't need any weapons." We got most of the brothers to put the spikes back, but I think a couple of them may have slipped them into their boots. They were nervous and scared, and I think they felt secure with these things on them.

We left some people behind to secure the building so that it wouldn't be taken away from us, because we were constantly watched by the RCMP and the OPP and the city police. We left some young and some older people together—we had learned our lesson from Toronto.



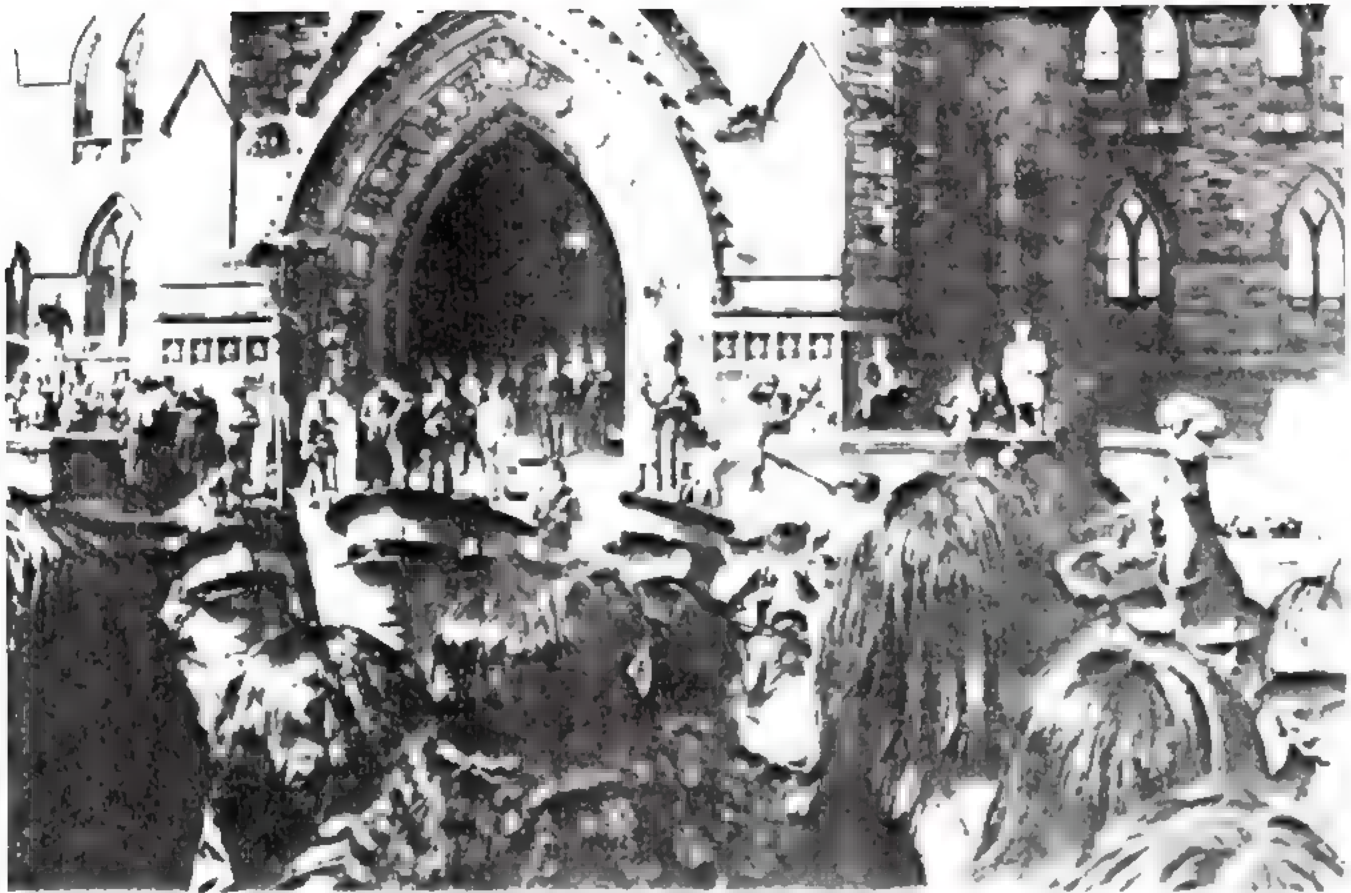
*"We had a little over a mile to march, and as we marched quite a few people joined our ranks."*

That morning, when we were getting ready to go, it was cold. Some church people had brought down a whole bunch of old clothes the night before, and a lot of brothers put on these old fur coats that had a 1920s and 1930s look. I remember my son Vince putting on one of them. It was real colourful seeing our people wearing these baggy 20s and 30s clothes mixed with headbands, caps, and hats with feathers.

Everyone met on the second floor as we were going out. We were on what they call Victoria Island, on the bridge between Hull and Ottawa, and we crossed over from the Québec side. We had some banners, and the drum from the Ojibway Warrior Society went on ahead. The drum is part of our culture and our heritage, and it always went with us.

We had a little over a mile to march, and as we marched quite a few people—Native and non-native—joined our ranks. There were a lot of T.V. cameras. When we got to the Hill we were glad to see so many people waiting for us. I think it gave us a false feeling of security. We felt that these people were right with us, but most of them were only observers; they just came to see what was going on.

Earlier that day the Montagnais people from Québec had come down ahead of us and built a monument for James Bay. They built it out of rocks, and as they put the rocks on the monument the RCMP took them away. They were there, and some of the Native students from Trent University, and some non-natives. So a tremendous number of people joined us.



*"When we got to the bottom of the steps we were surprised to be faced with barricades. We had expected to be able to march up to the front door of the Parliament Buildings."*

Then the CPC(ML) arrived in large numbers from the other direction. They were slightly behind us, with their bright red banners. We didn't have many banners ourselves; we had a few flags, and we had the drum. I think our mistake was that we did not instruct the support groups just to be there, without their banners. But we were inexperienced and the demonstration was open to everyone, Native and non-native.

When we got to the bottom of the steps we were surprised to be faced with barricades. We had expected to be able to march up to the front door of the Parliament Buildings at the top of Parliament Hill. Some individuals decided that they wanted to go right through and get into the Parliament Buildings, and a few of our people were arrested. It was quite confusing, because we had agreed that there would be no violence.

I was in front, and as the barricades were pushed aside there was quite a scuffle. When I saw one of the RCMP flip my son Vince, I grabbed him and then my son jumped up and helped me. My son and I have had different opinions on different things, but there we were father and son struggling together. I think that incident was really important because we knew, kind of by instinct, who the enemy was and what we had to do. He was thrown on the ground and I got knocked down, but the main thing is that we both got up and fought side by side.

Some of the people who saw us fighting came and helped us, and we were able to get control. The RCMP was pushed aside and we managed to get to the top of the steps before the RCMP re-established the barricades. That all happened at 2:00 o'clock. Then things settled down and the drumming started.





*"We hadn't asked ourselves, 'What if they don't listen to us?' We thought for sure someone would come out."*

I remember being all caught up in it. I saw my family behind me, and we thought everything was going to be O.K. We never really planned how long we would be there. We just said we would make our demands, and we expected a Member of Parliament to come out and meet us. The sun came out a couple of times but it was a cold, fall day. We hadn't asked ourselves "What if they don't listen to us?" We thought for sure someone would come out. It was going to be a long afternoon.

There were a lot of news reporters on the Hill that day, but one of the few people who described what really happened was Gary George, a Native reporter. This is what he wrote:

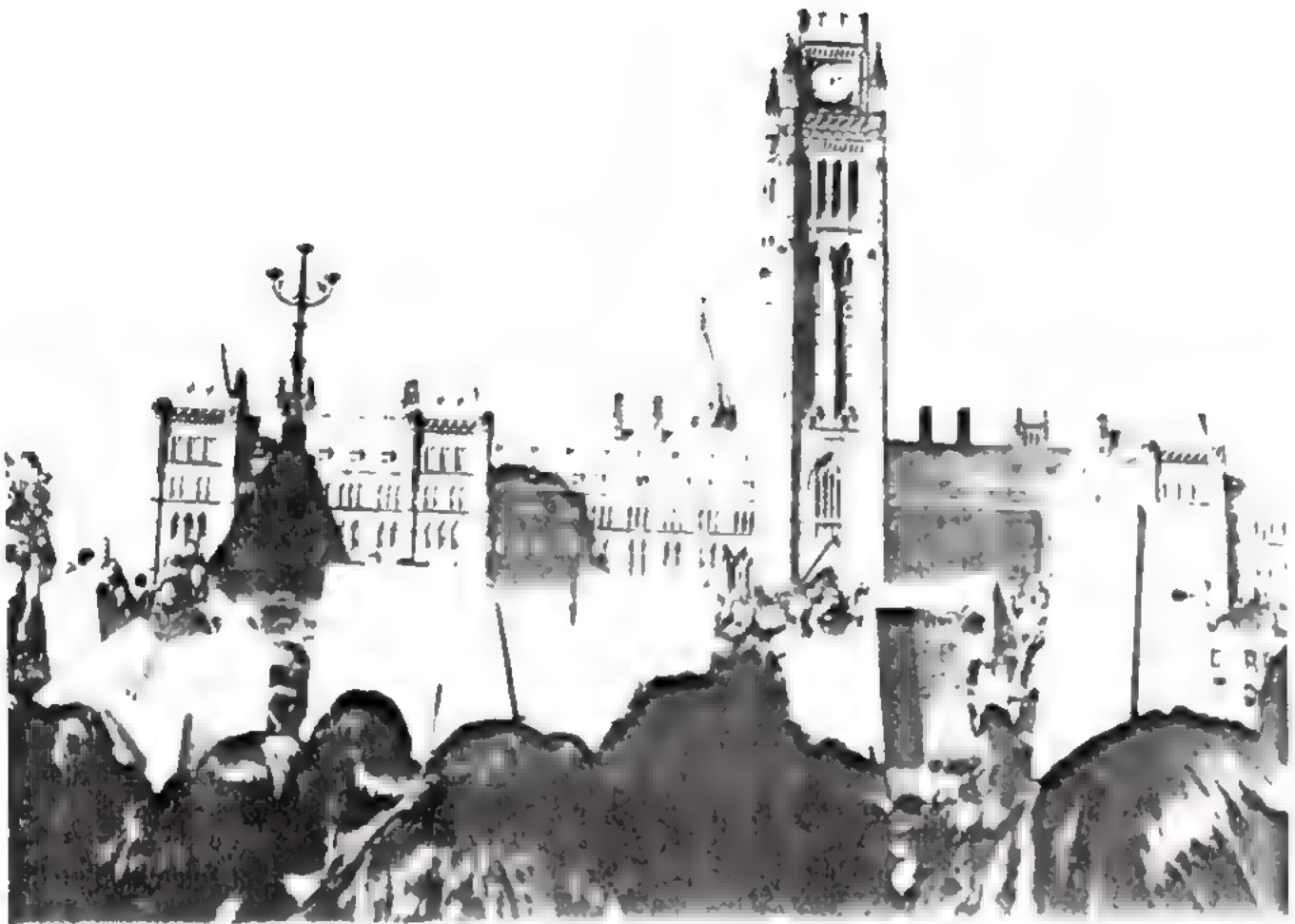
#### **NATIVES DEMONSTRATE** by Gary George

The myth of a non-violent Canadian society was smashed to pieces in front of Canada's Peace Tower on Parliament Hill on September 30th.

The clash was between club-swinging, helmet-wearing, riot-trained RCMP and placard-carrying Native men, women, children and non-native supporters, all calling for positive action to end the oppression of Native people in Canada.

This incident marked the 30th opening of the Canadian Parliament, the official beginning of the Trudeau government's rule with a majority of seats in the House of Commons. The violence started when government officials refused to recognize the presence of the demonstrators. The





pomp and ceremony of Parliament's opening continued with few changes in tradition.

When the estimated 200 demonstrators reached the stairs on Parliament Hill leading to the Centre Bloc they were stopped by RCMP and wooden barricades. As more people marched up the stairs, the front line of Native people was forced against the barricades.

This clash lasted for about twenty minutes before both sides stopped physical conflict. When it finally quieted down the police moved back about a foot and stood four men deep, arms locked, facing the demonstrators. Directly behind them were the press and white spectators.

The Native drummers started beating out the American Indian Movement's rally song. Men, women and children joined voices in the song, filling the air with the chant. The peace bells started to chime as a military band came around from the west end of the Parliament Buildings

playing a traditional march and leading the military honour guard with rifles and bayonets. This increased the chanting and drumming until the air was filled with a combination of bugles, french horns, trombones and Indian chanting. The honour guard was then ordered to stand at attention as the Chief Justice of Canada, Bora Laskin, surfaced from his plush, chauffeur-driven limousine to review the guards from a little red pedestal. This move on the part of the Chief Justice to use a limousine and not the traditional open carriage indicated that the RCMP expected violence even when it was stated by the Caravan spokesmen the night before that the demonstration was to be peaceful.

After his official review, the Chief Justice and Mrs. Laskin then turned and entered the big brass door of the House of Commons, escorted by two RCMP dressed in the traditional red coats.

The honour guard was then ordered to face the demonstrators and stand at alert. There was a noticeable uneasiness as one heard the clanging of metal against the pavement and watched the guards make mistakes during formation of ranks. They stood motionless, with such little facial expression that they seemed like robots.

Across the yard, on the steps of the House of Commons, dignitaries moved in and out of the building. Spectators stood there in safety watching the scene, while plain-clothes RCMP took pictures of the crowd. Occasionally men dressed in business suits and women in long gowns and mink stoles came out of the building to view the scene. Many laughed and talked with the RCMP posted on the steps of the House of Commons.

There was an uneasy silence from the demonstrators and then speeches were made calling for a meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau. They set a deadline of 4:00 o'clock for the meeting with the Prime Minister or his representative. The deadline passed with no sign of concern from the government. This increased the visible frustration and tension on many of the demonstrators' faces as the government continued to ignore their presence.

When the Chief Justice again appeared on the steps of Parliament there was some hope that he would speak with the group. This was soon dashed to the ground as he ignored the demonstrators and stood at attention as the band played "God Save the Queen." This non-recognition started a new round of chanting, drum beating, shouting and booing; the Canadian national anthem was drowned out and the band stopped playing. Chief Justice Laskin still ignored the demonstrators and drove off in a limousine.

Wanting to see what was happening, the people below the Centre Bloc courtyard started to move up the steps. This action sent the front line against the barricades and the police. This caused people to start falling and chaos took over as the police used the poles to hold back the crowd.

News cameras snapped as the police and Native people fought; Status, Non-Status Indian and Métis people joined against the police. Some of the white supporters were thrown into the action.

Everyone was kicking, punching, clubbing and swearing as the police were forced to give way and break formation. When this happened the honour guard closed their ranks and stood waiting. For a few minutes it seemed that the demonstrators might be forced to fight men with rifles and bayonets.

The tension and frustration grew and then subsided. The police again closed ranks and the demonstrators calmed down. The fight seemed to have ended with no side gaining any important ground.

Native people, beaten and bloody, picked themselves up from the ground and brushed off the dirt. A few policemen lost their caps and some were injured. The press was snapping pictures and recording with taped commentary.

About thirty minutes passed when, to the shock of everyone in the crowd, a rush of helmeted, club-swinging, riot-trained RCMP moved in on the unarmed crowd of demonstrators and spectators.

Chaos resumed with the people being pushed to the ground, clubbed and kicked by the riot police. Women and men grabbed for anything they could use as weapons of defence. At a disadvantage, the Native demonstrators were forced down the steps to the lower lawn of Parliament Hill. The police then told the crowd to disperse and continued down the steps. Someone set an evergreen tree on fire and smoke filtered past the Peace Tower.

The poorly armed and unarmed demonstrators then turned to the street to escape the armed riot police. Manned by young girls, the drum continued beating, leading the people to the main gates. As the crowd neared the street they noticed the main gate had been closed by the police. Ottawa's city police were a visible force standing on the other side of the black iron fence.

A sense of helplessness became apparent as people turned around and saw the riot police swiftly advancing. Boxed in, the adults grabbed the children and wounded to help them escape the pending disaster. Tension grew but as the crowd moved near the fence they noticed the small side gates had been left open. A feeling of relief came over the demonstrators as they moved into the street.

Ottawa's rush hour traffic was diverted south by the police while the street filled, as Native people and their supporters moved off federal property.

Sirens blared and fire trucks moved up Parliament Hill to put out the tree fire. The riot police stopped at the gates and the demonstrators regrouped around the drum. The AIM rally song then echoed over the scene as the group moved west on Wellington Street to the Union Carbide building.

*The Forgotten People, October 1974.*



*"The tension and frustration grew and then subsided. The police again closed ranks and the demonstrators calmed down "*

*Diary, Parliament Hill, September 30, 1974*

We have given them 25 minutes to get Judd Buchanan to come out and see us or else.

They have taken Gordon Stonechild and one other brother into custody. When we came up the steps, Kelly and Gordon, who were carrying the upside down flag, were forced back and attacked first. That's when Gordon was taken and Kelly knocked down and stepped on and treated very rough. They used force to keep us back but our brothers are brave and fought back. The reason we stopped was because we were told to by our people . . . .

We have asked for our brothers back several times but have got no response. They are very silent.

The drums are going again. This makes me feel good and adds strength to my spirit. I am not afraid. I don't want to die but I have come for a reason, for my people, all of my brothers and sisters . . . . There are 15 minutes left. There are

screams about Trudeau, that asshole, throughout the crowd. We want to talk to Trudeau but he doesn't come out. I wonder why. They said they couldn't speak to us because we were violent and we carried arms but we have no arms now and still they don't talk. Instead they have arms. They have the Army here and the RCMP. They have guns with knives on the end of them. Also when the Army came they had a band bring them on but our drums drowned them out. They also tried to drown us out by ringing those stupid bells but they couldn't and stopped.

There was a sound of glass breaking but I don't know who or what it is. There are a lot of brothers here from all over. There are also big guns here like cannons.

The only things we have to defend ourselves with are a few clubs. But we will not back down.

Member, Native People's Caravan



THE CANADIAN PRESS





THE CANADIAN PRESS



*"A lot of people couldn't believe what was happening, when the riot squad attacked us. Some people were knocked off the steps and off the ledge—a fifteen-foot drop."* THE CANADIAN PRESS

A lot of people couldn't believe what was happening, when the riot squad attacked us. Some people were knocked off the steps and off the ledge—a fifteen-foot drop. I was hit on the head with a riot club and received a concussion in the first part of the fight, and Cindy Anderson's skull was cracked when she was thrown from a paddy wagon. The sister who had been getting all dressed up—her hat was twisted around, her ribbon was knocked off, and her make-up was smeared all over her face. It didn't look like she had been at a dance.

It was a really terrifying experience for the children. Pauline and I were up front, and some of the non-natives in the back were looking after our kids. One of my boys was being carried up on a man's shoulders, and when the riot squad attacked he got so scared he wet himself. But another of my sons, the four-year-old, was quite unconcerned. He was walking around on the grass with a box of chips while the riot squad was coming towards him. They were maybe twenty yards away, or even closer. There were bodies dropping and clubs going, but he was more interested in eating his chips than anything else. We had to actually scoop him up and run. We felt that maybe he had seen so much violence on T.V. that he thought this was just like a T.V. programme. He wasn't scared, but he was the only one who wasn't.

Then one of my girls, Luana, had gotten lost, and of course we were looking for her; we were worried. When the riot squad attacked she got back to the end, down near the gate. A white woman who was walking by saw what was going on, and was kind enough to take Luana and talk to her, and settle her down. She told her to stay with her by the main gate, knowing that we would be looking for her. So she kept her there, and when we came through that way, we found her.

I believe that the whole thing was pre-planned, that the Cabinet knew the riot squad was going to be used on us. We had put them in an embarrassing position. Here it was, the opening of Parliament, and the world was watching. And when you look at the main thrust of that Caravan—people who were in Cache Creek, people who were in Kenora—I believe they felt, "We've got most of the Native radicals right here."

I feel that the riot squad was used on us to accomplish a number of things. One was to show Native people across the country that if they supported us or got involved in the Native liberation movement, this is what they would get. The government was licking its wounds from Kenora and Cache Creek, because those were victories for the movement. And here we were, the same bunch of people with more support than ever before. I believe they were trying to intimidate us, to break our spirit, to teach us a lesson, and to drive off non-native support. It was also meant to show people across the country and on the reserves, "This is a taste of what you'll get if you use these confrontation tactics." Because that's what it was, a confrontation.

We had gone to Ottawa to discuss our grievances, to talk face-to-face with the government about issues like housing and education and self-determination. But when we got there we were met with violence. The riot squad deliberately attacked us, and whenever I talk to people about that day I always point out that it wasn't Native people who rioted—it was the RCMP.



*"When we were forced off the Hill the drum kept us together, going back to the building we had occupied."*



## XII Back From The Hill

When we were forced off the Hill the drum kept us together, going back to the building we had occupied. That drum was like the heartbeat of our people, and there was a feeling, coming off the Hill, that a Nation was starting to come together. Everyone felt really strong towards each other.

It didn't look like a victory but in a way it was, because the riot squad exposed the role of the RCMP towards Native people once and for all, right in front of thousands of people across Canada. A lot of people couldn't believe their eyes, but Native people, who live under daily attacks from the RCMP, felt they were simply showing their true colours. The Queen's Cowboys, as we call them, were laying their thing down to us like they always do, here on the national steps of Ottawa.

Up until then we didn't have real strong support from some of our people across the country. But when Native people on the reserves saw the RCMP riot on television, all that changed. And a lot of non-native people who had been kind of indifferent became strong supporters of the Caravan. All over the country, people wrote letters to the editors of their newspapers—some for us, some against us, but most of them protesting about what had happened. I think the way the RCMP openly attacked us made a lot of people who didn't care one way or the other take a stand. They didn't like the brutality that was used against unarmed people. So it was a victory, because it won over a lot of people.

Wally Firth, a Native Member of Parliament, said later that he had been on his way out of the Parliament Buildings to see us but it was already too late; the riot squad had attacked us. He said he cried when he saw what was going on, but at times

tears aren't enough. And Flora MacDonald, who was at that time the Conservative critic for Indian Affairs—where was she? She's supposed to be such a defender of Native people. I'm convinced that if any of them, if just one of these so-called defenders of Native people had come out to talk to us, that riot could have been avoided. The Members of Parliament could have prevented it, but because of their own interests, they didn't. Well, they say birds of a feather flock together.

I had felt disillusioned when I was involved in Native organizations, but I was all the more disillusioned on that day, when I saw what contempt the government and the police had for Native people. They didn't quite see us as human beings. And on the day after the riot they were congratulating each other on how well they had handled the situation. They would never have used the riot squad on white people. But the Native People's Caravan gave them a chance to test the riot squad—which they never used before or since—on real people.

I was really disillusioned with the churches too. The role of the church is still to work hand in hand with the government. Christians give a good rap about how they support Native people, but what they should talk about is how they lead Native people, because that's what they've always tried to do. We gave them an opportunity to support, but their understanding of support is to give blankets and a few stale sandwiches and a few bus tickets. We're very suspicious of people who give us blankets, ever since Sitting Bull's people got smallpox from the blankets that were given to them. So we have a great distrust for Christian people, even though a lot of our own people are Christians.

# Indian people came in peace she protests

To the editor of The Star:

Your coverage of the demonstration on Parliament Hill ("300 Mounties, troops quell Indians' protest" Oct. 1) contained a serious distortion due to the omission of some facts.

Why for instance was it not mentioned that the Indian people came in peace bringing with them a bona-fide declaration of their wish to negotiate without violence?

Perhaps this was overlooked because the Indians otherwise might have appeared to be quite genuine, less exciting than the riotous mob.

After a long time I was allowed to believe that the caravan had serious concerns and sensible attitudes, but then even began to question (Heaven forbid!) the democratic system which has so miserably failed to respond to the voice of these people.

EVELYN McNARY  
Peterborough

## 'A field day for South African press'

To the editor of The Star:

Native people marching on Parliament and being clubbed by the state police and army. Petty criminals benten in jail for pure sadism.

What a field day the South African press could be having right now if it too were a bleeding heart press fretting about problems around the world and ignoring problems on its own doorstep.

GEORGE HARRY  
Scarborough

does not permit the purchase of enough food let alone lumber for house building.

And just at this opportune juncture our government announces that Canada will increase its official aid to developing countries to \$733 million next year — up 25 per cent.

Shall we attempt to re-habilitate the rest of the overpopulated world or shall we come to the rescue of

our own first citizens who now are programmed for oblivion?

A massive rehousing program for Canadian Indian families is not an unreasonable request after two centuries of frustration and neglect. Just how Canadian are we?

WARREN LORRAINE  
Ottawa

## 'Time for action to aid Indians'

To the editor of The Star:

We have seen some violence recently on Parliament Hill from a number of Indian groups and supporters from across Canada.

The manner in which the march was made has been much criticized from both white and native people alike. I would like to suggest that we talk too much, and then although the verbalization of our many complaints has been some kind of active participation, we forget that it even happened.

Whether we agree with their approach or not is not the issue here. What are we going to do about it?

I think its time we began to listen and more importantly act with regard to the problems faced by our native people.

ROSEMARY PETERSON  
Thunder Bay

## 'Oppressive action by government'

To the editor of The Star:

If a full investigation of the Indians' demonstration on Parliament Hill is to be held — as The Star editorial recommends ("Despair produces desperate action," Oct. 2)

then let's have public, open hearings so that the Canadian government's conspicuous lack of responsible action and the RCMP riot squad's oppressive use of force will come out instead of covered up or rationalized away.

The government's oppressive action on the people—both Indians and white people — at the demonstration was simply the most recent example of its consistent and traditional policy of oppressive oppression against the Indian people of Canada — our own native citizens and original founders.

An inhumanly oppressed people's violence as an act of protest and resistance is always justified since it is a struggle for human freedom, human right, human justice—not only for Indian people but for all oppressed people everywhere.

DON WEITZ  
Toronto

## 'Media blackout on Indian caravan'

To the editor of The Star:

Perhaps Indian Affairs Minister David Buchanan is correct in saying that the Ottawa demonstration worked "to the disadvantage of Indians across the country." ("While agitators roused Indians Buchanan says," Oct. 2.) but it did accomplish one thing, publicity for the plight of many of Canada's native people.

During the time the caravan moved towards Ottawa there was almost a blackout, as far as the news media were concerned, on its progress.

Why could some of the sad facts not have been revealed then, before things came to a head in Ottawa?

CLAUDINE GOLLEN  
Scarborough

I thought that the Christians should have been up there on the Hill, that they should have practiced a little of their Christianity. But most of them were ready to see Communists behind every pillar in Ottawa. The Quakers did oppose the government, and some of the Christian women who came out to make a stand for Native people have suffered for it. They've been denounced or pushed back. It's one thing for people to talk about things, and it's another for people to take action.

After the riot, the Canadian Federation of Civil Liberties and Human Rights Associations did lot of work and presented a brief to Warren Allmand, who was Solicitor-General at that time (before he became Minister of Indian Affairs). This brief contained peoples' personal accounts of what happened on the Hill.

Any time something like the RCMP riot happens, it's so easy for the government to say "Let's have an inquiry." From that day until right now, we've asked to have an inquiry into the riot, but the government always shrewdly gets around it. The government could have an inquiry tomorrow, but they realize that if they did they would be exposed. Even if they could get some people to lie, and I guess they could, they couldn't cover up all the facts. It would be proven that the RCMP, under orders, caused the riot and attacked our people.

It was an important day, the 30th of September, 1974, because it caused some people who had not been very involved in the movement to become dedicated to the struggle. From that day forth, many people gave a total commitment to seeing the end of tyranny and the oppression of Native people.

It was important, too, for our children to be there. Our children used to ask us, "Why do we go to demonstrations?" We always take our children with us to demonstrations, because they're a part of the struggle. We give them the best protection we can, but if we isolate them they can turn around and say, "You're excluding me."

A lot of times we get attacked for this. Some people say that we hide behind our children, but it's not true at all. It's very important that our children be a part of the struggle and see what's happening. A year after the RCMP riot, one of our kids wrote an essay in school about what happened

on Parliament Hill. All the other kids talked about the opening of Parliament, and she talked about the RCMP attacking our people. The teacher wouldn't accept it. She said, "Maybe, Luana, the RCMP was hard on Indians and did this kind of thing in your parents' time, but things are different now." Luana said, "Oh no, they're not different. I was there. I saw it with my own eyes." And so the teacher changed the subject and went on to something else.

For our people, and our children, and their children, the struggle is on and there's no turning back. The lines are drawn. It's quite clear to Native people that we'll never be assimilated and that we'll never stop fighting until we see the end of a society built upon racism and political oppression.

### *"When People Are Calling, You Go"*

When we got to the Hill we saw soldiers with bayonet guns—some kind of honour guard—and RCMP lined up in ranks of four in front of the Parliament Buildings. First Louis Cameron spoke, presenting our demands and asking Trudeau or an Indian Affairs official to come and talk to us. They are elected to serve the needs of Native people too—they should respond to what we have to say. We stood and waited for some government representatives to show up and talk to us. No one came. We said we would give them 25 minutes to send someone out. Two hours later we were still standing there waiting. We got there at 1:30 p.m. and at 4:00 we still stood waiting . . .

We were unarmed men, women and children. And their riot squad came and started beating us. We fell down on our backs, our hands and knees and they kept on smashing at us with their sticks. Didn't matter if we were retreating—they were trampling and smashing up . . .

There were soldiers there, and tanks and bayonets to back up the police. There to protect Trudeau and his likes, I guess. And they obey even if people are unarmed. Then the riot squad came on over the loudspeakers and started telling us to move, and we were driven onto the street. Lots of people could hardly walk—their brothers and sisters walked beside them, holding them up. The drums were beating.

# Chief Indian group wants clash inquiry

OTTAWA — (CP) — The National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) yesterday called for an independent investigation into Monday's violent melee between native

stone federal building near parliament Hill.

But he said the caravan, made up of between 500

Trudell said that U.S. Indians would cross the border to back up Canadian

## Neutral probe called for on Parliament Hill clash

By GORD HENDERSON

An independent ombudsman should investigate complaints about police handling of an Indian demonstration on Parliament Hill last week, says Alan Borovoy, general counsel for the Canadian Civil Liberties Union.

they are not frustration by calate.

"Governments themselves will empty rhetoric and don't loopholes or money to be problem.

"The dispa what the law

## Inquiry again demanded into violent Hill protest

The Canadian Federation of Civil Liberties and Human Rights Associations Wednesday night renewed its demand with affidavits from

UP 2

F J-  
: now  
ed on  
ough  
am

### A number of questions

# Indians want investigation into clash with riot squad

he (Solicitor General Warren Almand) promises," said Mr. Borovoy.

"An internal investigation is not good enough." He said KCMF investigators would be vulnerable to accusations of covering up or being biased.

"Even if the investigation is carried out fairly the problem is it won't be perceived as fair—it won't have the appearance of justice."

cent it is 34-1-1. The CCLU carried out investigations problems in Ont. area, fou concealed cost justice for Ind

Many Indians, living on reserves well outside Kenora, have to take taxis, at a cost of as much as \$60, to be present for court appearances on minor charges

With a...  
tion.

Federation president Don Whiteside later told a news conference that Mr. Almand had promised to look over the additional information before coming to a decision.

Mr. Borovoy said all the blame can't be placed on officials in isolated areas. He said the real problem is government apathy in southern Canada.



Later that night back at the Embassy one young brother collapsed. He had been badly injured and had been coughing and spitting blood, but he didn't tell anyone. He collapsed later that night. We took him to the hospital. I don't know how many of our people went to hospital. They put in the paper a list of how many RCMP were injured, but not how many Indians.

My daughter wanted to go with me. She

laughs now and talks about how scared Trudeau was, hiding behind the walls. She has no fear of the police and says she feels brave to be fighting for her rights. I heard her yelling there on the Hill: "Give us our brothers back; I may be small but I'm willing to fight you."

"What did I learn from going to Ottawa with the Caravan?" she said. "I learned people have to fight for their rights."

Interview with Eetsah, *The Arrow*, Nov./Dec. 1974

Quotations taken from a brief prepared by the  
Canadian Federation of Civil Liberties and Human  
Rights Associations, October 1974

"The RCMP had the guns, the bayonets and the tear gas; we had a drum and a sheet of paper with our demands."

—Louis Cameron, *Ottawa Journal*, 1 October 1974

"The Indians were not met with understanding government officials. They were met by men with big sticks, hard hats, and a clubbing. What kind of mentality is that?"

—Wally Firth, MP, *CP Wire Service*, 4 October 1974

"The government provoked the Indian demonstration."

—The Right Honourable John Diefenbaker, MP, *CP Wire Service*, 3 October 1974

"It was obviously the police and not the native people which started the upheaval."

—psychiatrist, bystander, *Ottawa Journal*, 7 October 1974

"It was a police riot."

—anonymous Ottawa City policeman

"When the riot squad appeared my first reaction was 'Oh no, you're kidding'."

—Hal Anthony, reporter and general manager, *Contemporary News*, Lowell Green's Open Line, CFRA, 1 October 1974

"Never in modern memory have armed troops and a riot squad been pressed into action to help the normal security of RCMP during a demonstration."

—*Toronto Star*, 1 October 1974

"There should be an inquiry."

—Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, Native Council of Canada, and the Canadian Association in Support of Native Peoples, press release, 4 October 1974

"A man was collared by four policemen. The non-Indian was forced to the ground. One policeman put a knee into the man's forehead while two others held him down and a third put on handcuffs. He was dragged away his face bloody. A Mountie grabbed and tossed aside a reporter who was making notes."

—Robert Avery, reporter, *Ottawa Journal*, 1 October 1974

"During the skirmish riot squad officers pushed people off the stone wall on top of the Hill, a fifteen foot drop, and down the stairs using their clubs liberally on demonstrators as well as bystanders."

—Paul Mitchell and Keith Reynolds, reporters, *Canadian University Press*, 1 October 1974

"One Indian has a possible broken arm. She was hit by a policeman's riot stick."

—*CP Wire Service*, 4 October 1974

"I required three stitches on my skull as it was cut right down to the bone."

—Perry Schooner, Indian demonstrator

"A full investigation of the incident must be held."

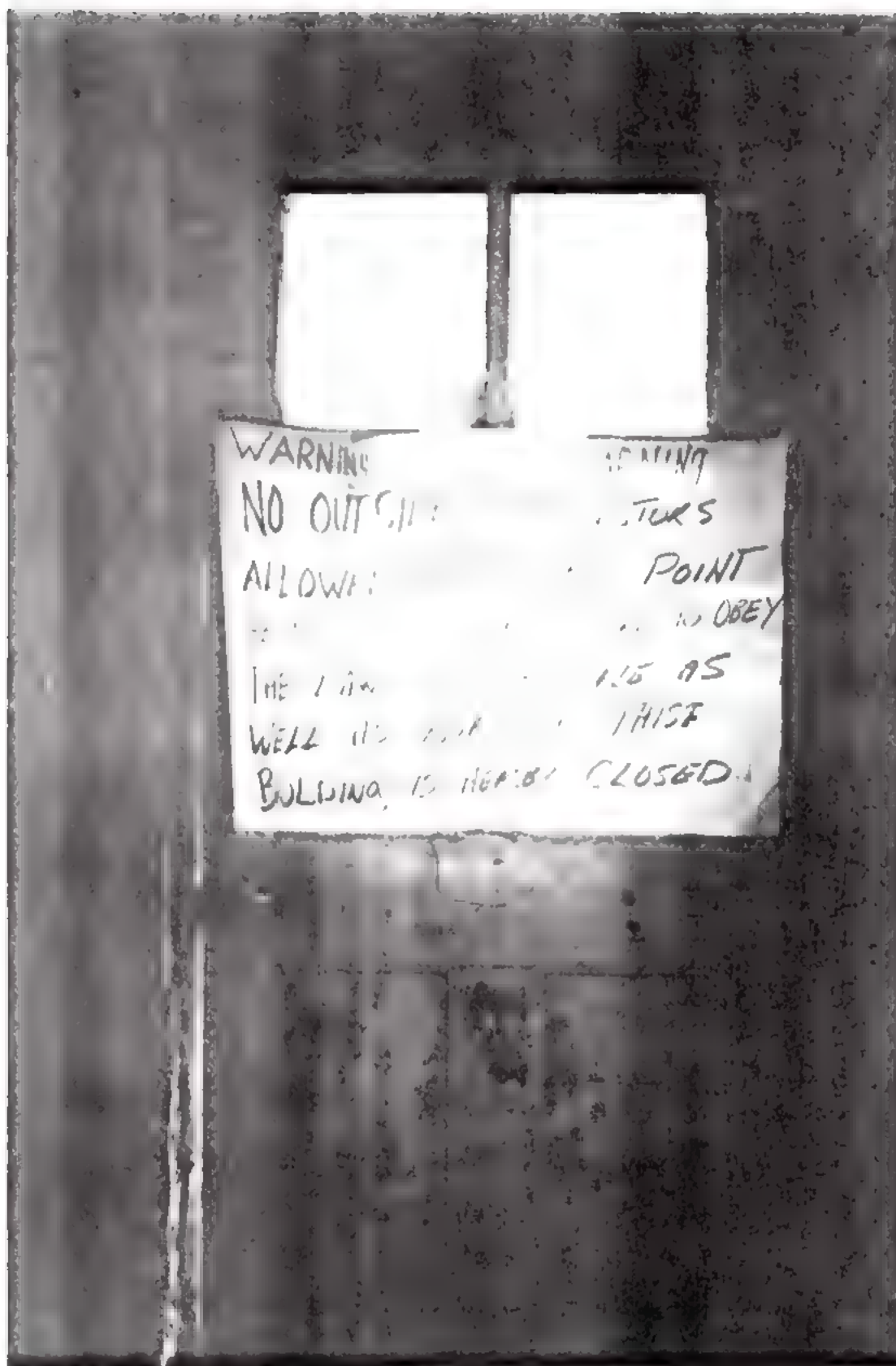
—editorial, *Toronto Star*, 2 October 1974

"There should be an independent investigation of the unnecessary violence by the police."

—Union of Ontario Indians, Grand Council Treaty No. 3, Grand Council Treaty No. 9, Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians, *London Evening Free Press*, 2 October 1974

"Evidence indicates that native people were the victims rather than the perpetrators of violence. There should be an independent inquiry."

—*Ottawa Citizen*, 4 October 1974



WARNING

NO OUTSIDE

ALLOWED

THE

WELL

BUILDING

WARNING

STOPS

POINT

DO OBEY

AS

THIS

CLOSED

## **XIII The Native People's Embassy**

The building that we occupied in Ottawa belonged to the National Capital Commission. It was called the Carbide Mills Building. We returned there after the riot and licked our wounds, and then we had a general meeting. It was a big gathering; there were some outsiders, but the majority of the people were from the Caravan.

Some people were trying to blame the CPC(ML) for what had happened, because when the riot squad attacked us we were caught between them and the CPC(ML). People were angry and frustrated. But Butch Elliot said, "We have to remember that it was the people in front of us who were the enemy, not the people behind us. Let's get on with the things we have to do now." So we started talking.

It was decided then that we would set up the Native People's Embassy. Louis and myself and a few others opposed it because we felt that we had accomplished what we came for. Our idea had been to have a Caravan, to be in Ottawa on the opening day of Parliament, and to draw public attention to our problems as Native people. And we had been successful. But a lot of the younger people, and some of the other people on the Central Committee, felt that we should set up an Embassy and try to build alliances with other communities—Native communities and Third World communities. Some of us felt that we were not equipped to do that kind of thing at that time. I felt that we should go back and work in our communities and tell people what had happened. But others saw the Embassy as a long-term project, and the majority felt that we should stay.

It was well-organized at first. There was security to register who was going in and out. We

had a nursery; there was a first-aid station; there were offices and typewriters; we had people working on press releases and newsletters.

People would come and go. We had people coming in from Six Nations and other areas in Ontario, and university students came to visit us. Food was brought in—once again the Quakers helped us, and some big company donated a whole bunch of food. Whenever we went outside we went in a group so nobody would bother us, and the only people who were harassed were the people who stayed outside by themselves.

We called ourselves the Native People's Embassy, and even had some writing paper made up with that name on it. People wrote letters asking for support; we prepared press releases; and Louis Cameron made statements to the media.

It was an enormous place, and we had people scattered all over it. Because we had children, Pauline and I stayed in the nursery area and tried to help there. By this time there was a whole bunch of kids—maybe thirty—and all the fathers and mothers worked with each other. The young people were sleeping all over the place. Some of the young brothers would stay up all night and sleep all day. I guess they were kind of scared at nighttime because they would walk around banging their heels.

The building was very old and a lot of washrooms didn't work; the toilets were always plugging. Sanitary facilities weren't that good, and we didn't have good cooking facilities. It was a big place and hard to keep clean, even though we had cleaning details.

A couple of weeks after the riot, morale started breaking down. Someone came up with the



*Louis Cameron with Doug Durham (right), who was later exposed as an undercover FBI agent.*

idea that we get John Trudell or somebody else from the American Indian Movement to come up and talk to us. We got a message across, and then heard that somebody was coming to spend a few days with us. We got a call to go out to the airport to pick up this brother, as we called him, and he had no problem getting into the country; he just came right off the plane with his stuff.

When we got back to the Embassy it was late, but we started to talk. I had never seen him before though I had heard a little bit about him. His name was Doug Durham. He had worked closely with Dennis Banks, and was supposed to be head of security for the American Indian Movement. And he fit in quite well. He spent a couple of days with us, talked to the people, had a few press con-

ferences. People liked him; he made a good impression.

After he was exposed as an undercover FBI agent people said that they knew all the time, but he had completely fooled all of us. In fact, I kind of liked the guy; I got to know him a bit. At that time I was a strong supporter of communism—the Chinese kind of communism—so he was interested in talking to me and told me how many friends he had that were communist supporters. I never told him anything that I didn't tell anybody else, but he had fooled everybody completely so I imagine he gave the FBI and the RCMP a lot of information. It's kind of funny to think about it, because we gave him security; we were worried about him. It wasn't until months and months later that he was exposed



as the informer he really was. Now he's found his true calling. He's lecturing for the John Birch Society, a racist organization like the Western Guard.

The Embassy lasted for a few months, but as other priorities came up people went back to their own communities. It dwindled down to a few young people who really had nowhere to go, and they finally decided it was in the best interests of the people to close it down. The Native organizations had opposed the Embassy because it took attention away from them, so they were happy to see it go. In fact, they helped arrange funds to get people home.

There was a squabble over that building while we were there. The National Indian Brotherhood wanted to use it as a historical museum, and some people wanted to turn it into a bird sanctuary. Finally a fire settled it. After our people left, that building burned to the ground, so the birds got it after all.

We heard later that the RCMP blamed me for that fire, but at the time I was supposed to be burning down the Embassy I was having a meeting with a number of people in Toronto. In fact, we were always very careful about fire while we were there.

It's true that the fire must have been deliberately set, because it was a stone building, but I believe that the RCMP burned down the Embassy to make sure we couldn't use it again. We learned later that the RCMP had experience burning buildings; they burned down a barn in Québec so the FLQ could not meet with the Black Panthers. The Embassy would have been a good place to work out of, for any other mass demonstration. When we had a vigil for Leonard Peltier on Parliament Hill, it could have been used as an Ottawa base. The RCMP didn't want to put guards on that building all the time, so their best strategy was to destroy the Embassy and blame the people who would have used it.

The Native people here on Victoria Island in Ottawa, as in Cornwall, Alcatraz, James Bay, Cold Lake, Wounded Knee, Kenora, Cache Creek, and Parliament Hill, ask all of you to help us win the battle for our culture and our independence. We ask this because we believe in the right of self-determination of all people

We, in the spirit of Louis Riel, whose statue was unveiled by your Prime Minister on October 2, 1968, hold on to this embassy as a symbol of resistance for the social justice Mr. Trudeau spoke of so easily.

The United Nations has said this year is International Women's Year. Your government has joined this fight to better the position of women in Canada. Why not fight for our rights and dignity too?

It has been hard living in Ottawa under unfriendly pressure from government and the pressure of indifference of the public. But we *must continue to resist*.

We stand tall and proud as a symbol of resistance! And, if your police beat us into the ground, the spirit of the land will make us, and others, rise up again and again. We will be free.

Stand with us Canadians and maybe one day we can stand together in peace.

When that day comes, we will turn the flag of your nation right side up, as it should be when people are free

John Graham and others, Native People's Embassy



John Graham took this inside photograph of the Native People's Embassy on February 5, 1975, using Bruce Paton's pre-set camera.



*"One reason we had organized the Caravan was because we were very disillusioned with official Native organizations like the National Indian Brotherhood."*

## **XIV Government-Funded Native Organizations**

One reason we had organized the Caravan was because we were very disillusioned with official Native organizations like the National Indian Brotherhood. We knew that they were ineffective, and that they were not really helping to change things for Native people. In fact, their main role seemed to be to keep the lid on Native protest and Native demands. The government had created and funded these organizations in the first place, and it was able to use them to protect itself from any kind of confrontation or direct criticism. When Native people tried to go around the organizations, the government's line was always, "We can only talk to your official representatives." Even this was false, because the government wasn't talking to the official Native leaders. But in 1974, the reality of Native organizations was well established. Many of the people on the Caravan had been in government-funded organizations and gone through that whole, frustrating experience.

Before becoming involved with the Caravan, I had been the Vice-President of the Ontario Métis and Non-Status Indian Association—OMNSIA. I was very naive about Native organizations at first, but when I realized what they were all about, I left. A lot of people get into Native organizations with the intention of helping their people, but to become a leader you have to become opportunistic. It's a dog-eat-dog world, and you learn all the political tricks. It's just how white politicians operate; it's their arena. But after being in Native organizations for a period of time, you realize what it's all about. Even myself, who's very slow at learning, realized.

When people are in the Native organizations long enough they become like the Indian Affairs

agents, the advisors and consultants who feed off the backs of their own people. A lot of people feel that we need them, but we don't. They need us; they make their living off our problems. It's important that we understand that, and do something about it. What a lot of people do about it is go along for the ride themselves.

I had to look at this, and ask myself, "What am I going to do? Do I go along with this, or do I fight it?" I decided to fight. I didn't know how to go about it so I was vulnerable, and I got involved in radical, white politics. And of course my political enemies jumped all over me.

I don't begrudge Native people the benefits they get by working for Native organizations. I'd like to see every Native person have a good house and a car and a job. But because people in the Native organizations are so limited in what they can do, it often comes at the expense of their own people. I wasn't prepared to go along with that, and many others also got out. There are a few individual leaders who have been able to accomplish a lot within the Native organizations. One of the best and strongest is Jim Sinclair of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan. In spite of the corrupt political arena he's in, he's been able to act in a principled way.

Another Native leader who has shown the ability to serve, and one of the shrewdest Native politicians that I know, is Stan Daniels—the in-and-out President of the Alberta Métis Society. He's even foxier and craftier than Harold Cardinal. Stan Daniels really knows the enemy, but for his own reasons he will not fight the system; he's engaged in reformist activities. I still have quite a bit of respect for him. He's the one who pointed

out to me how naive I was, when I was involved in OMNSIA in 1973. That constructive criticism hurt me, because of my big ego. I thought I knew what I was doing, and he pointed out how much I didn't know. Stan, who doesn't need or want to wear any kind of regalia, like buttons or braids or chokers, feels very proud of being a Métis and part of the Native movement. Because of his wisdom, and his analysis of the situation, I often feel that if he became a revolutionary the movement would move by leaps and bounds.

We approached the Native organizations for support, but they didn't really know how to deal with the Caravan. Some of them gave us money under the table, but most of them resented us. They felt that we were troublemakers, and that we were undermining their leadership. The people who came out in strong support were Fred House of the British Columbia Association of Non-Status Indians, Jim Sinclair, Harry Daniels of the Native Council of Canada, and Art Manuel, who was with the Youth Organization of the National Indian Brotherhood.

Except for Indian Rights for Indian Women, the leadership of the Native women's organizations did not get involved with the Caravan, though there were a lot of women up on the Hill who belonged to Native organizations. We were disappointed; we felt that they could have been more forward. But to be fair, they were just getting together and organizing themselves at the time.

One of the most reactionary groups turned out to be the one I had been with—the Ontario Métis and Non-Status Indian Association. It had been organized to be a political group, but it failed to move in that direction. It concentrated on programmes, and ignored its role as the political voice of the over 80,000 Métis and Non-Status Indians in Ontario. It has never really taken a political stand on anything. Just after the occupation of Anicinabe Park, the government met with some Native leaders in Ottawa and asked one of the executive members of OMNSIA, "What's your position on Native militancy?" He answered, "Well during Kenora they never gave us a phone call, so we didn't have any position." The Native people in the room were really embarrassed. And this was the kind of person we had to deal with when we

approached Native organizations.

We were disappointed in George Manuel too. When we went to meet him during the Caravan he talked to us paternalistically, like he was the father and we were the children. And he had been drinking, at 4:00 in the afternoon. We thought, "Well, so much for the leader of the National Indian Brotherhood." I was embarrassed for him, because we had a lot of young people with us who were status Indians and they were very disillusioned when they came out of the office. I tried not to be too liberal. I just said "Well, in that position they drive you to drink."

The person who our people were most disappointed in was Harold Cardinal, because he was the most visible Native leader in Canada at the time. We felt that he should have taken a stronger stand. Then in 1977 he seemed to join the white establishment by taking a heavy government job in the Department of Indian Affairs, as Director-General of the Alberta region.

Many people on the Caravan wanted to see Indian Affairs run by a Native person, and that's why the Manifesto demanded that George Manuel be made head of Indian Affairs. I personally, along with some others, opposed it because we felt that it would just be a token position. We felt that Indian Affairs should be abolished altogether—the Department of Indian Affairs was created to exploit and oppress Native people, and as long as it stands it will continue to do that. We didn't just want to rock the boat; we wanted to sink it.

The government is putting more Native people into Indian Affairs now, so it can have greater control over what's happening on the reserves. In a way it's doing some good, because it's bringing the role of Indian Affairs out into the open. Native people are really beginning to look at the whole thing, and see how it operates. On every reserve now, the question is self-determination. People want to run their own communities, and they've seen that they have the ability to do it. But if Native people don't move quickly it might be too late. When you develop that kind of colonial mentality you're going to have goons coming onto the reserves—Native people enforcing with the stick what the government wants, just like it happened in South Dakota. As people say, every policy the



## Indian protesters lack credibility, says Buchanan

OTTAWA — (CP) — Indian Affairs Minister Judd Buchanan has attacked the credibility of an Indian group involved Monday in a violent clash with police in front of the Parliament buildings.

The actions of the group "work to the disadvantage of Indians," says the minister, Buchanan told reporters.

### SEVERAL MORE

A number of Indians were hurt, at least one seriously. Twenty-seventh October. A person at Regina is in the hospital.

OCT 17

## No results gained by Indian protest, says Buchanan

OTTAWA — (CP) — Indian Affairs Minister Judd Buchanan has attacked the credibility of an Indian group involved Monday in a violent clash with police in front of the Parliament buildings.

The actions of the group "work to the disadvantage of Indians," says the minister, Buchanan told reporters.

## Govt. policies heard by India as Buchanan visits reserves

OCT 18 1974

Caravan members

promised fare home

Inc Caravan's actions paid off, bureaucratic red tape slashed

'Looks like a breakthrough'

Demonstration provided access to Cabinet, Indian says

Americans have tried and failed, the Canadian government will try ten years later.

After the RCMP riot, the organizations who had supported us before became more supportive, and the ones who didn't were forced off the fence. Some people made political hay off it. One was Gloria George, the President of the Native Council of Canada, who later told people that she had been on the Hill during the riot, and acted like she'd been one of the people attacked. She was on the Hill, but many of us felt that she was there as an observer; she wasn't exactly one of us. We questioned her leadership too. Though she was progressive in some ways we felt that she was encouraging Native people to assimilate, so we did not think too highly of her. Harry Daniels, who is now President of the Native Council of Canada, was supportive to the Caravan but he was only Secretary-Treasurer at the time so he was limited in the support he could give us.

One of the things the Caravan accomplished was to give Native organizations direct access to the Federal Cabinet. We had organized the Caravan because we knew that the Native organizations were not being listened to, but the RCMP riot ex-

posed and embarrassed the government, and forced them to meet with the Native leadership which they had created and tried to ignore.

Judd Buchanan, who was the Minister of Indian Affairs, would not meet with us after the riot but he and a special Cabinet committee met with the leaders of the National Indian Brotherhood. At that meeting, they agreed that the Brotherhood would be able to talk with the Cabinet on a regular basis.

George Manuel gave the credit to the Native People's Caravan. He said, "It looks like we made a breakthrough, and I think we can credit to a large degree the grassroots people saying 'enough, enough.'" So the Native People's Caravan was able to get the Prime Minister and the Cabinet to meet with them. Though it took a few lumps on peoples' heads to do it, we were quite pleased that we were able to accomplish that.

But as soon as the NIB met with the Cabinet, they abandoned their demand that an inquiry be called into the RCMP riot on Parliament Hill. And the opportunity was lost to expose the role of the RCMP in brutalizing and oppressing Native people.

*Interview with Patrick Cody, of the Laurentian Alliance of Métis and Non-status Indians, February 17th, 1977*

PAT: In September, 1974, I was Local President of the Non-Status Indian and Métis Association in Montréal, and we had heard that some Native people were going to Ottawa to demonstrate. I knew a little bit about the Caravan, but because the media does not cover the same stuff in Québec as in the rest of Canada everything that we heard about the Caravan was more or less word of mouth.

We were coming from another perspective, too, because of the different process of colonization we had experienced, being beaten more than once by different colonial powers. The French were the first to come into Québec; then the English took over and had a different way of dealing with Native people. Now, with the James Bay project, big money from the United States was being used to take away our land. We felt we had to concentrate our efforts on the provincial government, which was dealing directly with Native people in James Bay, so we decided that we would not get completely involved in the Caravan as members.

But some of our Montagnais people were interested in going down to Ottawa and showing solidarity. Basically, they speak their own language—Montagnais—and French as a second language. They speak very little English. So a lot of people felt that this would be a way of joining together with other Native people and saying that even though we're from different parts of the country and have different histories of oppression, after three or four hundred years we're all in the same boat.

The Montagnais were from about five hundred miles northeast of Montréal along the St. Lawrence River, and they were pretty broke, so we started trying to raise money for the trip. We finally got some sympathetic non-native people to help us send our people to the Hill. Within a week we got it together and went down there. And we ended up sending thirty to forty people from Québec—Montagnais people, Mohawk people from Caughnawaga, and some Algonquin people from northwestern Québec. But we were more or less the tail end of the show.

We came in late, and got there when everyone was moving up the steps on Parliament Hill. We were surprised to see as many Québec Natives as there were; we saw a lot of people that we knew. And a lot of us could see what was coming, because we'd had experiences with different demonstrations in Québec. We had seen

what the government would do to non-natives, like when the Army came into Québec in 1970, and we figured that they'd be even tougher with Native people. Because of the James Bay question, it was a pretty high priority for the government to make sure that Natives didn't get the upper hand in any kind of negotiation or confrontation. And we felt that the government always over-reacted to any situation where Native people grouped together. It's nothing new; it's the government's historical response to Native people. I would consider it strange if the RCMP hadn't reacted that way.

VERN: What did you and your people think when you saw the red banners of the CPC(ML)?

PAT: That kind of turned us off. We had experienced a lot of that stuff in Québec, and we felt that in one way Native people were being used as guinea pigs, just to make news for the Maoists. We felt that they were being opportunists, and we didn't really want to get involved with them. We really would have preferred an all Native thing, but we said, "Well, if it's going to be Natives and non-natives together, maybe the non-natives should go up front instead of pushing from behind."

VERN: You felt they were pushing from behind?

PAT: I felt that, yes.

VERN: Under the circumstances, how do you think everyone behaved?

PAT: I think the Native people were pretty good. I saw a lot of provocative actions on the part of the RCMP and the soldiers. We were just standing there, watching people drumming, when the soldiers came marching out and stood right in front of everyone, and then turned around and faced us with bayonets. They had these smirks on their faces, like "We're going to take care of you, boy, if you move." And we knew it; we were looking them right in the eye too.



VERN: You were the focal President of the Laurentian Alliance. Do you know how the provincial body reacted to the Caravan?

PAT: That was funny. Something happened that really showed me where some of the elected leadership is at. I was in the provincial office on the day of the demonstration, getting some people together to go to Ottawa, when we got a telex from the national office of the Native Council of Canada. And on the telex it said, "What should we do? Should we support the Native People's Caravan?" It seemed liked if we supported it we were going to lose our credibility with the government as being middle-of-the-road, moderate people. And we knew that that telex had gone out to every provincial association. What that showed to me was that when Native groups have to think about whether they're going to support other Native groups or side with the government, then there's something fundamentally wrong with the system: because we should never divide our own people. And we said, "Well Jesus, if we have to tell them what to do, in terms of taking a position, then they're not in touch with what's happening." We decided then and there that we would definitely support the Caravan as a provincial group.

VERN: What was the talk around Ottawa after the riot on Parliament Hill? Do you feel that the Caravan opened the doors of the government for the National Indian Brotherhood?

PAT: There's a lot of Native groups in Ottawa that won't come out and say so, but they are kind of happy that that demonstration took place. I talked to a lot of guys, and what they told me was that if this thing hadn't happened, then today we'd still be on first base negotiating with the government. But after the demonstration, the government realized that Native people meant business, and that they'd better start talking to some moderate Native people who they could sit down and have dialogue with. They could either negotiate with the moderate, elected leadership, or negotiate directly with people at the grass-roots level, people who are probably a lot tougher to negotiate with. It's kind of like a gentleman's agreement now, though we're not necessarily dealing with gentlemen. The government realized, after the riot, that if they didn't start coming up with some reasonable solutions to Native peoples' problems, they were probably going to have to face more demonstrations in many areas of the country. And they wouldn't be able to put these down as easily as they did a group of unarmed Native people on the Hill.

VERN. Since then, the Québec people that

were there . . . where are they now? What do you think the Caravan accomplished for them?

PAT: Before that time, Native people in Québec felt that they were all alone, that there was nothing happening outside of Québec. People in northern Québec never even heard about things like Wounded Knee in the States. But after that demonstration, and for the next couple of years, there was more and more interest in finding out what is going on in other provinces, in other parts of North America. A lot of our problem has been isolation—linguistic and geographical isolation—but now there's a new awareness that there are Native people fighting for the same ideals and objectives outside of the province. We know that we're not alone, and that whatever happens to us affects all Native people.

We were able to see that when Native people stand up for what is right, the government is ready to put us down just as hard as if they were facing another army. They're as afraid of a couple of hundred Native people getting together as they are of 10,000 guys with guns.

It's been about three years since that demonstration on Parliament Hill, and a lot of water has gone under the bridge. Since then, a lot of the Native people who were in some way involved with that demonstration have developed a greater awareness of Native peoples' position vis-à-vis the government, and vis-à-vis the force of capitalism in North America—especially in Québec, where big business has been taking big chunks of our land for development. We see more similarities between ourselves and, say, people in Chile, where the same mines are ripping off the people there, and our people in northern Québec. One-sixth of our entire province is going to be flooded, and all our Native people in the north are going to have to be relocated. American companies have big mines up there, and private tourist clubs where a Native person has to pay \$6.00 a day to go fishing.

What we found out later, about the James Bay settlement, was that a lot of Native people who are not Cree, like the Montagnais, the Algonquins, and the Attaviks, who we call *Tête-de-Boule*, were involved in these agreements without even knowing it. We just started to find out later how much we were going to be affected. It's shown Native people that we don't have much of a choice about accepting those agreements; they're going to be forced down our throats. So now we're redefining our position as Natives in Québec. We've been looking at the situation and seeing that we're not just Native people in Québec, but part of the entire scene now.



*Ken Basil, Jim Wenjack, Louis Cameron and Ed Burnstick outside the Vancouver Indian Friendship Centre, on Vine Street*



## **XV What's After Tomorrow?**

We didn't always have time, during the Caravan, to analyze everything that was happening—it all happened so fast. But some things did become clear. I think if the Caravan did anything, it opened peoples' eyes. It showed us that struggle was possible.

A lot of people might say "Why hadn't you seen this before?" But I feel that we had not been allowed to make our own mistakes before. Most of our lives, we'd been made to suffer from the mistakes made on our behalf—by Indian Affairs, the Children's Aid, all these agencies. We didn't really have any choice.

We always thought, and always were taught, that we should learn from white people. But on the Caravan we realized that a lot of non-native people could learn from us. In fact, many non-native people were very willing to learn what we went through and how we think and how we feel. Many working people who came to the rallies were there not just to support or out of curiosity, but to learn. And it's very important that we understand that.

I think a lot of non-natives were learning, too, during the Caravan, how to support. They were so used to leading and telling; they found it awkward to support. And we found it very awkward and strange to lead. We didn't quite know how to do it, and we made some mistakes. But we learned from those mistakes.

It was an educational Caravan for all the people on it—with a very important lesson up on the Hill. That's where class was dismissed! The teacher came out with a club. Out of that Caravan, there are people now in the struggle who know who the enemy is. The church, the school, the government and the media had made a lot of our people

believe that we are each other's enemy. But we began to understand, through working together, that we are not.

And I think that Native people on the Caravan started to realize that working people aren't their enemies, that working people are in some cases taken for just as much of a ride as Native people. Up until '74, Natives and workers were pretty isolated from each other—Natives believing that working people are just a bunch of honkies and rednecks out to get Native people, and working people believing that Native people are just a bunch of shiftless, lazy bums. This was the image that the government and the church and all its vehicles had successfully promoted. And '74 started to crack the foundation of those lies.

Native people learned that Canadian working people are interested in their job, their family, and an honest day's pay for an honest day's work. They don't really feel one way or another about Native people. And Canadian working people learned that there are still Native people around, that the Native way of life has not disappeared into the museums. I've talked to taxi drivers since the Caravan, who've told me quite bluntly that they'd seen a few drunks, and that what they'd heard of Native people wasn't good. A lot of them said that they couldn't have cared less about Native people up until that time, but that the riot on the Hill and Kenora and Cache Creek made them wonder about the reality of Native people. All of the publicity, good and bad, showed them that Native people are still here, and still fighting.

Our people are starting to understand that, from the beginning, the RCMP has been our enemy—always has been, and always will be. It can't be any other way unless they join us and that's impossible, because the RCMP is a tool of the government, to be used against us. People are beginning to understand that. And it's not going to make our situation any better to have our people join the RCMP or the Department of Indian Affairs. In fact, it will make things worse, because then our own people will be used against us. This has happened already. Some of the Native RCMP are very brutal, because they want to prove to their masters that they're loyal and doing their job well. History repeats itself. When people were fighting for their independence in India, their own people were used against them, and they were very hard and very cruel.

The Caravan also showed us that we had overestimated the enemy. The RCMP know that Native people are not basically aggressive, and so they're taught to intimidate us. That's their tactic; that's the way they train. But on Parliament Hill a lot of our people were fighting hand to hand with the RCMP, and we were throwing them around. They weren't invincible.

The Caravan was a testing ground all the way around, and I think that's where a lot of us started to get honest with ourselves. It made us look at ourselves, and at our situation. It's hard for people to analyze their situation when they're just trying to put bannock and lard on the table, just trying to survive in the reserves and the Métis colonies and the cities. But in 1974 people said "O.K., we're going to survive, but we're going to survive with pride and dignity." This is one of the things the Caravan taught us. As Native people we're not doing anything if we don't have that self-worthiness and pride and dignity that was given to us by our ancestors. Most of us come from very proud backgrounds. I myself am the grandson of a hereditary chief, and I asked myself in 1974, "If my grandfather could come and look at me now, would he be pleased?" I didn't think he would. So I decided I would try to shape up.

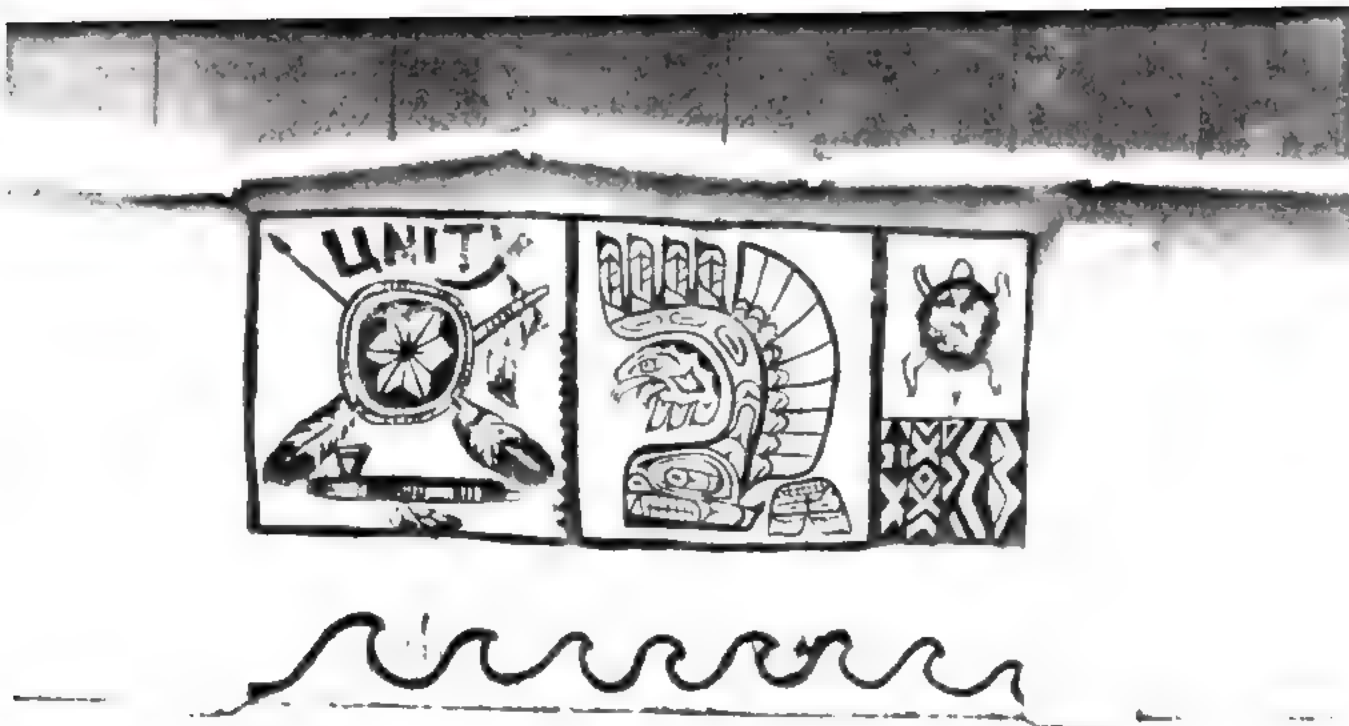
People were beginning to think and feel like Native people. We're conditioned *not* to think that way, not to feel that way, but in 1974 all that conditioning was being cast aside.

It was a historical year: the Caravan, Cache Creek, Kenora, the RCMP riot, the Embassy. Ever since the white man landed here we've had resistance, but 1974 was a turning point because then we had a massive resistance of Native people all across the country. And it was the foundation of an even stronger resistance to come. At that time some people were still thinking about assimilation, but '74 turned that around. A lot of Native people decided that from there on it would be genocide or nationhood. Simple as that. They would do everything they could to oppose genocide, and give everything—their lives included—to achieve nationhood. And there are people from the Caravan who have now become strong resistance fighters, and will play a very strong part in building a nation.

We hear a lot about Confederation. Well Confederation doesn't mean much to Native people. I think Native people have been pretty patient. We've spent 400 years trying to get along with our non-native neighbours, and finally we're saying that we'll go along without them, and even in spite of them if we have to. Native people are going to take their destiny into their own hands, and fight for what they believe in.

Sometimes so-called prominent Canadians say "What have the Indians done for this country?" A lot of people on the reserves really resent that, because many of them gave their sons and daughters to serve in the wars. I believe that if there was another foreign war, our people would not respond to it. The next time Native people pick up guns it will be in North America to defend our land, and not for someone else's interest. So though there was always resistance, I think '74 started to develop mass resistance among Native people. And it won over a lot of non-native people to our side.

The Caravan also taught us to strengthen the family. We had allowed our families to be broken up, our children to be taken away from us, and our old people to be shuffled off into old folks' homes. Many of our women started to look at themselves too, and to be proud of their Nativeness. They've thought about women's liberation, and they support it, but they believe that they should be with their people and struggle with their people as a whole.



BRUCE PATON

Looking back at the Caravan, we can see how important it was. Some people will try to undermine it, will say that it wasn't important, but it was very important. Our enemies understood how important it was. They were willing to attack us. They tried to discredit the Caravan and to break it, but they weren't able to do that. And we were very successful, right across the country.

In the 1930s, Canadian working people tried to do the same thing, by railroad. They took a long time and they only got as far as Regina, because the opposition had enough time to isolate their leaders. And this was one thing we learned, to keep our leaders with us. Even though we let Louis go ahead, we had enough leaders to see that the bond between the leaders and the people could not be broken. And because we moved so quickly, the government didn't really have a chance to stop us. So though the time factor worked against us in one way, it also worked in our favour. The Caravan

happened so quickly that we were on their doorstep before they knew it. A lot of Native people have been taught to say, "What have we accomplished?" but we accomplished what Canadian working people weren't able to do before us.

I think everyone who was on the Caravan benefited from it in one way or another. Maybe not at the time, but later. Some of the people I met there were an important part of my life, and though we had to go our separate ways we'll always be in tune with each other and respect each other. In struggle that's the way it is.

It was a small Caravan, but we had good representation across the country, and all the people who learned something went back to wherever they came from—the cities, the reserves, the colonies, the jails, whatever—to share those experiences and show that struggle is possible. A lot of our people had lost hope—people who were alcoholics, or drug addicts, or in prison, or living on

the streets. The Caravan kind of inspired them; it helped change their attitudes. They'd say "Gee, look at those people!"

Some of our people hadn't agreed with the Caravan, but when the RCMP riot was shown on television, Native people right across Canada became really angry. I remember one waiter, a big strong Native brother who was working in a bar, just trying to get by. He said he was infuriated when he saw his people being treated like that. Some guy in the bar shouted "Hey Chief! Get your ass over here with some beer!" He went over and gave him the beer tray and told him to stick it up his ass. He said the riot changed his way of thinking. And I think a lot of people needed that; they were going around in a vicious circle.

On some people it didn't fizz at all. I know some people who were so heavy into drinking that they didn't even know what had happened in Kenora, or on the Caravan. But when we travelled around and talked to people they started to ask us about it, and said that they would like to get involved. Right across the country it had that effect. Some people felt bad that they hadn't been involved, but we told them there will be an opportunity again; the struggle will go on and on. So even the people who didn't know anything about the Caravan in 1974 learned about it later, and began to see how important it was.

The Caravan helped to break down the isolation between Native people, and it taught us how important it is to organize. One individual or group or tribe can only do so much, but when we put our forces together, we can accomplish much more. It showed us how important it is to discipline ourselves. It showed us how important it is to develop our own information and publishing network. It showed us how important it is to educate the non-native. It was a real exciting time.

Since 1974, I've seen the resistance grow stronger and more organized. There is more organizing in the local communities; more groups are breaking out of their isolation; groups are forming alliances. People are working in their own areas, but they have people travelling back and forth to keep communications open. A moccasin telegraph has been developed. We're not relying on the mails but on our own people—couriers going across the country, giving information. So though it's not in

the headlines, the movement has been growing. We've seen the Dene Nation concept emerge, and the Native Studies Group from B.C. going to China—they looked at their lack of involvement in the Caravan, and became involved in the Mount Currie roadblock.

The movement is on more of an upswing than it was in '74, but it's not so visible. It's not confrontation politics; it's organizing and building for future struggle. In the past, organizations would build things up to a height and then—bang!—they'd go flat. People would get discouraged and give up. What happened in '74 was that it came to a height and then people went back to their areas to work. More Warrior Societies and AIM chapters have been created; more organizing has been done; there has been more communication between Native organizations and militant groups. More people have started to struggle and investigate. And that's what we're trying to get people to do—look at things, try to understand things, and get involved. In the future there will probably be more confrontation, but only after the groundwork has been laid. From here on, when actions are taken there will be more thought, more preparation, and more analysis. This is starting to happen.

There will be some irresponsible groups and individuals who will act on their own, but that happens in all movements. Because our movement is so big and broad, we have some people who use the movement for their own purposes. Some do it intentionally; some do it unintentionally. Quite a few use it as their ticket, their rap, their spiel—whatever you want to call it. They are destructive forces because they do work without really understanding what they're doing. It's hard to deal with these people.

The media has always attacked AIM, and some of our own people have attacked it. Usually it's because they don't understand it, but sometimes it's because of poor leadership. The movement, too, has so many parts to it. Some of these are still in the barrooms and the poolrooms, and sometimes people misunderstand; they think that's the leadership. Then there are the RCMP agents and the FBI agents—people acting as *agents provocateurs*.

People are learning that all can't be leaders, and we're even questioning the type of leadership we want. All over the country right now it's very



clear that people want sober leadership, not an irresponsible leadership that disregards the people.

There might come a time when the American Indian Movement will go under, but another higher level of resistance is already starting to form. And each tool could be used either for the people or against the people.

I think that for Native people, the fat is in the fire. There will be strong resistance until there is a separate nation of Native people in North America. The resistance will get stronger and stronger, and become more organized, and gather more non-native support. We are dealing with racism within our own society, within Native communities, while the government tries to promote it. Sometimes it looks like we're making gains, and others like we're losing ground, but the divisions between Native people are starting to break down.

Many Native people are looking at socialism too, and trying to understand it. One Native leader said to me, "I would rather learn about socialism from a Native person than from a non-native."

And Native people have a right to look into it if they want to. Too many people—even Native people—have been willing to accept the stereotypes and say "an Indian is this" or "an Indian is that." If a Native person is interested in socialism, people automatically write him off. And a lot of people think that Native people are incapable of understanding socialism, that they just don't have the mentality to do it. They don't think that we could develop a Lenin or a Mao. But Native people who are starting to understand socialism challenge that. They feel that if Native people want to develop socialism for Native people, they can. Our will is unshakeable if we really believe in ourselves.

But the most important part of our movement is going to be our understanding of Native spiritualism. How we see it, and how serious we are about it. We will not exclude Native people from the movement because they are Christians; they have that right. But many of us are going back to the sacred ways of our people.



*John LaFord donated this drawing to the Wandering Spirit Survival School in Toronto*

## XVI Following the Red Path

At the time of the Caravan I was a strong supporter of Maoism and the CPC(ML). I had just come out of the Ontario Métis and Non-Status Indian Association, where I had been Vice-President, and I was really disenchanted with government-funded Native organizations. I was into using some very heavy jargon—rhetoric from the left—and some people were worried about me because they were scared of where I was moving them to. I wasn't sure of where I was moving myself, but I was very bitter towards the system and I wanted to fight. I felt, and I still believe, that socialism is the tool. But now I understand that it must be a type of socialism developed by Native people. Self-determination will not come under the CPC(ML) or any other political party like it.

Spiritualism had always been a very important part of my life, but like many other Native people I had been conditioned to neglect this legacy. On the Caravan I began to develop a deeper understanding of what spiritualism really means. I was just getting myself together, and the Caravan helped me do that. And I started to understand that Native people practice more socialism than many people in the left. We were treating each other like brothers and sisters.

Spiritualism is not capitalism; it is not communism either. It is a way of life that has been with Native people for thousands of years. But I don't see white people's socialism as a contradiction to Native spiritualism. Spiritualism means that no one owns the land; no industry exploits the people. Our elders and medicine people are servants in every shape and form.

Spiritualism is the land, the people, and the sharing of this—not a class separation. Our elders

teach us that we are all part of the circle of life, which contains the four races, the four seasons, and everything in nature—the rivers, trees, mountains, fish and animals. Every man, woman and child is part of this circle and we communicate with the Creator, who is outside it, through our elders.

The circle of life is a continuous cycle of all seasons and all generations, and we live in it today as part of yesterday and tomorrow. Our way of life, and all of our activities, are based on the spiritual understanding that we are a part of nature and must function as part of the whole. This spiritual awareness has been given to us by the Creator and taught to us by our elders, who communicate with the Creator through the pipe.

We are taught that red men and red women came from the salt waters and were created here, in the Western hemisphere, for a special task. The Great Spirit has given us this land to look after and care for so that we can pass it on to our children and our children's children for their use. We are the caretakers of the land, living in tune with nature and the environment. In turn, the land will look after us.

As part of the circle of life we must share the resources of the land and plan its use for the benefit of all. The land is our life; we depend on all natural things for our existence. We must live at peace with the land, for the destruction of our environment is the destruction of ourselves. And in all our decisions, we must think about the unborn.

Of all the races, the white man has gone against this more than any other. He has not just harmed himself, but all races, because he is destroying the environment. This is because he does not understand the circle of life, with its seasons,

times to rest and times to grow. The white man is not in tune with himself or with nature; therefore he is very dangerous. Each segment of his life is separate from the others. As an observer of the white man, I have seen him become a split personality. One side is a churchgoer, a man with concern for his community; the other is a competitor, and so greedy for power and material gain that he does not care how he accomplishes his goals. These two sides are separate and destructive, yet he puts them together and makes them seem as one.

If we make a decision today, we must always ask ourselves, "How will it affect the unborn?" But capitalists don't ask themselves this question; they don't care what happens tomorrow. We understand that we are the custodians of the land, and not the owners. This is why we can never sell it, or sign it away. This land was loaned to us by the Great Spirit and we have always shared it with the white man, but the white man has always misunderstood our actions.

The greatest crime the white man has inflicted on Native people in North America is trying to de-Spirit our people, to destroy our integrated way of life. He has used the church and government to do this—by trying to condition us into imitations of Europeans with European values, by ramming Christianity down our throats, by taking our education out of our own hands and forcing destructive educational processes upon us. He has used the Indian Act to divide Native people among themselves and to separate Native people from their traditional way of life, by saying that one person is an Indian and another person isn't.

What has made us survive as a race is the spiritual life of our people. Against great odds and great pressures, we have been able to survive four hundred years of colonial oppression and capitalism at its worst. Capitalism often disguises itself as a friend, but Native people understand its true role. Many Native people don't know the terms I am using, but they know the effects of all these things that are happening to them. Because of the conditions of a corrupt society, many Native people have been caught in the vicious circle of alcoholism, drug addiction and out-and-out greed which capitalism promotes. Alcohol has no place in the Native way of life, but it has been used as an

effective weapon to destroy us. Many Native people have allowed themselves to be brainwashed into underestimating their own potential and their own capabilities as spiritual beings. But today more and more Native people are beginning to understand spiritualism and their spiritual needs.

The return to our spiritual way of life leads only one way, and that is towards self-determination for Native people. I strongly believe that Native spiritualism and hard work will eventually lead to an independent Red Nation in North America. Of course, I don't believe that it will come under the capitalist system. Many of our traditions and many of our customs—such as giveaways and feasts (sharing with members of the community)—take anti-capitalist positions. After possessions accumulate, they are shared with love and respect. You give away things that you really cherish; things of value. You give away something you feel is part of yourself so you are giving a part of yourself.

Our spiritual way of life cannot exist within the capitalist system, which is built upon materialism and injustice. Under capitalism the land is not shared by the community, but owned by a few people who will sell our fathers' and mothers' bones to accumulate even more wealth. The leaders are not the servants of the people, but the servants of those who own big businesses.

Capitalism always has been and always will be an enemy of Native people. I feel that some of the people in the ruling class understand this, and that this is one of the true reasons they attack us. It is in their interests to keep Native people oppressed.

What is going to make the red man survive with pride and dignity is the spiritualism that has always been a part of him. Now, in 1978, many Native people are starting once again to learn from their elders and to respect them. We must always be grateful to our elders because they have preserved our language and the ways of our ancestors; they have saved our spiritual way of life from the onslaught of capitalism and colonial exploitation. Even if the white man were to kill all of our elders tomorrow he would find that genocide would not work, for we have children among us who will become elders tomorrow; we even have elders among the unborn.





*Dancing, The Native People's Caravan*

Our elders are our history books, but they will only give us a small amount of knowledge at a time. We can't expect to learn everything at once; we must hear the teachings four or five times before we achieve true understanding. We have been conditioned to abuse our elders or ignore them; other people think they can go to the elders and "pump everything out of them." But we must realize that we can't just put it all on tape; the learning process goes on and on. We must learn how to look after our elders and medicine people, and see to their needs when they get older, because our communication with the Creator comes through them.

The elders are our history books and the sweat lodges are our universities, but there is no graduation. There is nothing we can't learn, but we must always continue to strive for understanding through prayer, meditation and hard work. I be-

lieve that my whole life is a process of going from one journey to another, and that I will go to the Spirit World with the level of consciousness I have at the time of my death. When we leave our bodies we are onto another journey that never ends, and spiritualism can move us onto a higher level of consciousness.

In learning the sacred ways of our people it is important for us to relearn our mother's language, for our language is the key to our culture and the opening to understanding our traditional way of life. We must have the language which the Creator has given us before we can understand the deeper meaning of the elders' teachings.

We must also listen to and learn from our children. We understand that the Creator has given them to us as a gift, and that it is an honour for us to look after them for the short time we will have them with us. Our children are given to us in a pure

state, and until they become changed by the society in which we live, we can learn things about our environment and about ourselves by listening to them.

Another key to our movement will be understanding the role of our Native women. Because we have been living in a corrupt and sick society, many of our values have been undermined so that we have become like our enemy, sexist and racist, and that has been used against our own people to divide us. Women are very sacred beings because they have a direct connection with the fire of life; our children are loaned to us by the Creator through them. They are the ones who will decide whether we survive as a race of people, and our enemies are aware of this. They have deliberately tried to have our women sterilized in the Northern areas wherever possible.

A woman is a complete being, while a man must seek the other half of himself through the fast. We think of the drum as a woman and it is important for the drummers to respect it. This is why women are never drummers. On Parliament Hill when the RCMP attacked our people, the women picked up the drum and kept it going, but only until the men could reach it, so that the heart beat of our people would not be broken.

I strongly believe in prayer to the Creator, whom I call the Great Spirit. Yet I believe prayer alone is not enough. Hard work must go along with it to serve the needs of the people—not the individual, but the community. The Native spiritualist movement which is developing across this country will benefit both Natives and non-natives, because we are learning from our ancestors to live co-operatively, as they did.

We must learn from our elders and listen to our children, but I do not believe that we must wait for our children to make things better. Our elders, our children and ourselves can make things better now. We need not wait for tomorrow; we continue the struggle today.

Spiritualism, to me, is very down to earth—Mother Earth. I feel that it is really very practical, and that it always serves the interests of the people. I have seen Native spiritualism go through changes even in my lifetime. At one time our elders and spiritual leaders were underground, and Native

people weren't supposed to talk about spiritualism. Today, we talk about it quite openly. It is very important that many of our elders and medicine people are now emerging to lead us in the movement for self-determination for Native people.

Many non-natives have the false idea that when the red man is free, they will be in bondage. Their own leaders have given them this impression in order to control them. But the white man is also a part of the circle of life, and to wipe out one part of the circle would be to play the role of the Creator. This is why Native people have always shared with the white man.

Now, Natives and non-natives must learn to live co-operatively because the time of purification is at hand; some say it has already taken place. Mother Earth will be rebelling against the destruction that man has inflicted upon here, and will be cleansing herself. Our prophecies tell us that all this will take place. It has also been said that the white man will come to us at that time and ask for our help. It is important that whoever survives the purification will be able to live and share together; thus, the ones who consciously prepare now will survive. Only when the Red Nation emerges and we are living in *co-existence* with our non-native brothers and sisters will we be free.

As we struggle for self-determination and for spiritual understanding, it will become clear to us what it means to have an independent Red Nation in North America. Before the Europeans came to this country we had our own education, our own councils and our own medicine people. We were an independent nation, held together by spiritual beliefs and unwritten laws which we all understood. In the fight for self-determination, we must strive for the pride and dignity of our ancestors, and for their spiritual understanding of our relationship to the land. We must recapture our sense of wholeness, and our awareness of ourselves as spiritual beings.

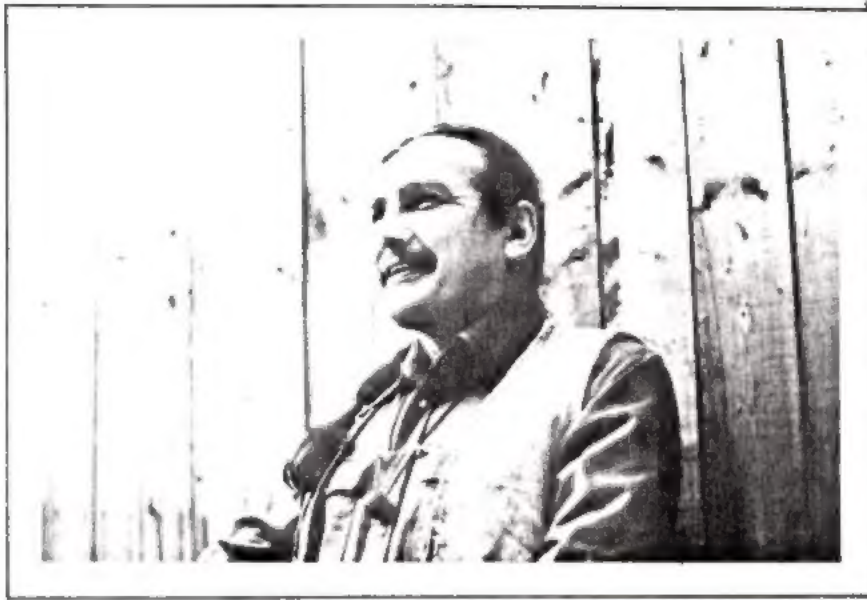
In a true sense, our politics is our spiritualism, and our political organization is the circle of life to which we belong. Self-determination might mean that we will develop a state within a state. It will definitely mean a return to our traditional ways. But because Native spiritualism is a way of life it is our actions that will be important; ideas and



theories aren't enough. And always, as we travel towards independence, we must seek the advice of our elders so that we will have a better understanding of events and will know how to respond to them.

Because of economic conditions, things are going to get worse before they get better. I believe that we are heading towards a dictatorship and by the time the average citizen wakes up it will be too late. But as far as Native people are concerned, as long as we believe in ourselves and our Creator and work hard at making our communities better places for ourselves and our children, we will overcome and survive. We have borne the brunt of colonial exploitation for over four hundred years, and after capitalism is defeated and gone we will still be here as proud red men and red women.

I first began to understand the true meaning of Native spiritualism on the Caravan, but it was a positive force in my life for many years before that. I think spiritualism has kept me going all these years. It helped me survive prisons, mental institutions, skid row, alcoholism, drug addiction, and the self-guilt that was conditioned and forced upon me. Now I am at the level of consciousness where I am learning the religious aspects of Native spiritualism, through pipe ceremonies, spiritual sweats, sun dances, peyote ceremonies, flesh offerings and other rituals. I am learning to speak my mother's tongue, as I once did when I was a small child. I am in the process of learning to be a red man again, and as that happens I will become a free man.



*Vern Harper, 1978*

***"The RCMP had the guns, the bayonets and the tear gas; we had a drum and a sheet of paper with our demands."—Louis Cameron***

On September 30th, 1974, the Native People's Caravan arrived in Ottawa for the thirtieth official opening of the Canadian Parliament. The Caravan had set out from Vancouver only two weeks before, with little advance planning and no official funding. It had come to talk about housing, education and health care, but when the people of the Caravan arrived on Parliament Hill the Prime Minister refused to meet them. Instead, they were charged by helmeted, club-swinging, riot-trained police.

This book is a first-person account of the Native People's Caravan by one of its members and co-founders. Vern Harper tells the story of the Caravan in the narrative style of the Native oral tradition, recounting its origins, the obstacles it overcame as it travelled across the country, and the learning experience it provided for the people on it.

The Native People's Caravan marked the climax of a dramatic period of Native militancy, closely following the occupation of Anicinabe Park and the road blockade at Cache Creek. In *Following the Red Path* Vern Harper discusses both the history of the Native movement and its future. He states that the movement has been on an upswing since 1974—though it hasn't always been in the headlines. Native people have been working in their communities and building their organizations, developing their political skills for future struggle.

And, the author emphasizes, "many of us are going back to the sacred ways of our people." In the conclusion to this book, Vern Harper discusses the connections between the political and spiritual aspects of the movement, and his belief that the road to Native Nationhood lies in following the red path of Native spiritualism.